



KENKYO, KENJITSU O MOTTO NI IKITE ORIMASU

I Will Live with Humility and Dependability as My Motto

**- Volume 1 -
PRIMARY SCHOOL ARC**

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– SYNOPSIS –

It was something that happened while I was waiting for the day of the primary school entrance exam. I realised that I had become one of the characters of a shoujo manga that I loved reading in my old life, 'you are my dolce'.

The role I was assigned was a character who bullied the commoner protagonist and tried to get in the way of her love with a rich boy nicknamed Emperor; a typical villainess rich girl, Kisshouin Reika.

At the end of the story, Reika suffered the Emperor's retribution and even her family fell into ruin. With the villain gone, the protagonist and the Emperor overcame their trials and became a couple.
And they lived happily ever after.

Wait, that's terrible for meee! The manga ended there, but I have to continue living my life after my family is ruined!

The protagonist can enjoy her romance or love or whatever on her own.
I'll erase my presence so that I don't anger the Emperor.

Eh-? The story isn't progressing well because there's no villain, you say?
But I'm busy saving up money and studying so that I can live well after the collapse.



謙
虚
堅
実

Young Kisshouin Reika

CHAPTER 1

I have memories of my previous life————

...No, I'm not a headcase. It's too embarrassing to tell anybody at all, but it's the truth.

I realised it around the time I was about to take my elementary school entrance exams. I've always kind of thought, *'Huh, I think I've seen this somewhere~'* about my name "Kisshouin Reika".

It happened on a day when Okaasama said, "Reika-chan, this is the school you're going to attend starting next year, you know." and brought me in front of this building surrounded by a brick wall.

Next to that large gate were the words 『Suiran Academy – Primary School Section』, and in particular, the words 『Suiran Academy』 shot through my head.

"Suiran Academy" and "Kisshouin Reika"? They were the names of the school and the character that appeared in 『kimi wa boku no dolce』 or 『you are my dolce』 !!

And as for that feeling of joy you get from solving a vague mystery that's been bothering you for many years (having said that though, it's only been a few since I was born), I didn't really get it.

'I see, I see. Kimidol, huh~? Woww, I feel so refreshed now. I see~.' or so I was thinking, when in the next moment, my face paled at my own situation.

『you are my dolce』 .

It was a popular shoujo manga in my past life. After the serialisation finished, it was turned into a drama with popular idols as the cast.

The story began when a commoner scholarship student protagonist entered the high

school section of private school that girls from decent families attended.

The commoner protagonist couldn't get used to the rich students who were incredible with everything they did. Even so, she somehow made friends with the few commoner students there, and worked hard every day at her hobby of making sweets.

And one day, she met with the boy known as 'Emperor' within the school, and fell in love. However, his followers wouldn't allow the commoner protagonist to get close to him, and relentlessly harassed her.

Well, the ringleader of the harassment was Kisshouin Reika though; in other words, me.

In the end, after overcoming numerous hardships, the two of them got together and lived happily ever after. However, at the very, very end, Kisshouin Reika who had continually bullied and tormented the protagonist once again got in their way, and using her parents' influence even went as far as getting engaged with the Emperor. And so, during the party where the engagement was to be announced, she was completely and utterly taken down.

In front of all the guests, the Emperor gave the shocking announcement that he was engaged to the protagonist, and on top of being majorly humiliated, as revenge for all the bullying she had done until then, the Kisshouin company had its stocks bought up and was taken over, Reika's father's fraud was exposed, and the entire family fell into ruin.

Reika who had a strong sense of being 'chosen' above others and who had looked down on commoners was expelled from the upper class, and fell to the commoner class.

With her prided curls disheveled, Reika gave a mad scream, and with the readers thinking back on her villainous ways until now, they all thought "Serves you right!" and felt refreshed. In my past life, I screamed "Hell yeah!" as well.

However, if this is how my current life ends, then the situation has changed. It's

definitely no good, that kind of thing is no good.

As for why, it's because I've become that complete villain, Kisshouin Reikaaaaa!!

Please, if this is a dream, let me wake up from it.

—————Unfortunately, I did not wake up from the dream.

The shock to my five-year-old body was too great, and I collapsed on the spot, and stayed in bed with developmental fever.

While having feverish nightmares of my certain future of ruin, I cried in terror.

To begin with, in my old life I was a complete commoner.

From my primary to high school, all of them were public schools, and in my high school days I worked a part time job to save up for a mobile.

I was born to an incredibly average salaryman family, and with a medium build and a common face, I was honestly a girl you could find just about anywhere.

I remember as far as graduating from vocational school and looking for a job. I can't remember anything from after that. I have absolutely no memory of getting married, or having children, or approaching old age.

Could it be that I died around 20? That's what it means to have no memories past there, right?

Or could it be that for some reason or other I've become a vegetable, and right now I'm continuing to dream of a manga that I liked from back when I was healthy?

Rather than a reincarnation story that I'd see in a dream, a story about dreaming as a vegetable seems more likely though.

Only, it was tough when I had the fever, when I fall over it hurts, and my meals are

yummy too. The sensations were too realistic.

As long as I knew how real these sensations were, I just couldn't really decide "It's just a dream anyway, so it's fine~".

It didn't matter if I'd reincarnated or if this was a dream, but if I was possessing someone else's body, anybody was fine, so I really wished it could be anyone other than Reika. I sincerely thought so, you know.

After recovering from my teething fever, the first thing I thought was *'Wouldn't it be fine to fail the exam to Suiran Academy then?'*.

Suiran Academy is the pinnacle of schools for rich people. Just going to the school is a better status symbol than anything else.

My Kisshouin family is a powerful one that hails from a Kazoku aristocratic house, and manages a number of companies. Both of my parents believe in the importance of bloodline, and are basically lumps of pride that believe that they're a special type of human.

And so, from before I was even a year old I was going to infant classes, in order to hammer in what I needed for the Suiran Academy entrance exam. Even the kindergarten I went to was one that boasted high rates of Suiran entrances; a famous brand kindergarten, you see.

I think at this rate, with my lineage, parentage, and assets, I'm going to get into Suiran. But if I go to school there, I'll meet with disaster in the end.

If I don't get involved with the main characters and live my own life, perhaps I'll be able to avoid destruction.

I mean, Suiran isn't the only rich people school. There are plenty of schools for Ojousamas, aren't there?

Right! That's what I'm going to do!

Or so I had determined, but the moment I saw my parents' faces, my determination

wavered.

As lumps of pride, wouldn't my parents treat the daughter who "failed to get into Suiran" as the dregs of our family and just abandon me?

I *do* have the memories as an adult from my old life(?), but living as a 5 year old whose parents treat her coldly would be tough.

And also, even if I failed to get into the Primary School Section, I can still get in during the Middle School Section.

Well, Suiran has "that", so only those who get in during Primary School are real Suiran Students, and even if I got in during the Middle School Section, I doubt my parents would fully approve.

Okaasama is acting like I've already gotten in (she told me "this is the school you're going to attend." before I even took an exam, after all). And almost all my relatives are attending Suiran, or have graduated from Suiran.

As for the courage I'd need to purposefully fail in an environment like this, it's absolutely impossible for me now that I've gotten back the memories of a cowardly super-plebeian.

Can't be helped. Guess I'll resign myself and go.

But I'm going to give it my all to avoid becoming a villainess character like in the original manga. It's tough being hated, right?

And even if I can't avoid that, I want to at least start planning for what happens after my family is ruined.

1. Cherish harmony amongst others. Don't make needless enemies.
2. Do not waste money. Steadily save up the pocket money you get. Set aside college tuition for after the fall.
3. Do not get involved with the Emperor. Naturally, do not get involved with the

Protagonist who will appear during the High School Section.

4. Show no interest in other people's romance, or else show a smile and faintly flaunt the fact that you won't get in their way. "Faintly" is important here; you can't have too much of a presence.

5. Even if you do fall into ruin, make sure to find a job that will provide for your meals. The goal is a government worker.

Alright. Guess that's good enough for now.

Unwilling villainess, Kisshouin Reika, will now give it her all to lead a life of peace and tranquility!

CHAPTER 2

I'm in. Suiran Academy, that is.

It's completely different to the primary school I attended in my old life(?).

The exterior looked like a European cathedral, befitting a school of long history. There was beautiful stained glass glittering at the entrance.

But inside, everything was completely new. Of course having aircon was standard for every room, but more than that, every classroom had its own humidifier and water dispenser. Floor heating for the winter too.

There was a heated swimming pool, and a tennis court, and a soccer field, and a baseball field, and a concert hall too. Even a mini theatre. Even a planetarium. While I'm at it, they even had a dome-shaped greenhouse and a tea room.

Besides these ones were plenty of other common sense-defying facilities as well.

Though there were a few facilities that were shared between the primary, middle and high school sections, anyway, it was all stuff that overturned my idea of what a "primary school" was like.

Anyway, even though Suiran is in the middle of the city, it takes up a huge amount of land, and because of all the greenery around, it's nicknamed Suiran Forest.

The uniform was designed by a famous designer, and is a blazer type uniform, as opposed to the sailor fuku types. For the middle and high school sections, the uniforms are white blazers with embroidered lines, and while the girls wear ribbons, the boys have a necktie, which are both burgundy for middle and dark blue for high.

Perhaps so that any dirty spots wouldn't be obvious, the primary blazer is navy with light blue ribbons and neckties. All of them are terribly cute.

As expected of a famous designer. Just being able to wear the uniform made me happy that I came here.

Suiran's uniform monopolises first place in the "uniforms people want to wear" rankings, and is admired by all the girls.

If I remember correctly, one of the reasons that the protagonist wanted to come here was because she adored this cute uniform.

Mn, mn, I totally understand.

Only, because the protagonist was bullied, her uniform was dirtied a lot...

In the middle and high sections you either choose from bringing your own lunch or buying food at the cafeteria, but in the primary section school lunches are provided. But the ones who make the lunch aren't your usual cafeteria obasans; they're chefs. There's no cafeteria duty for the students either. I mean, the cafeteria has full-time waitresses after all.

And the menu is so luxurious that I'm not even sure it's okay to call it a school lunch. Things like vichyssoise or veal terrine are on the menu like it's totally natural. I think we learn table manners here as well.

Black tea for drinks. If you'd prefer, you can add lemon or milk. By no means would you ever find a kid with a white moustache from gulping down milk.

For dessert we don't have frozen mikan; we have crêpe suzette.

Aah, it feels like it can't get any more impossible. This is what you call a culture shock. I bet this is how the protagonist felt when she entered the high school section, huhh.

I wonder just how much the tuition fees for this place are. It's scary so I'm trying not to think about it though.

Finally, the most important feature of Suiran Academy is a society called the Peony Society, or the "Pivoine".

The Pivoine is a gathering comprising students who not only entered during the

primary section, but who passed strict requirements for lineage, parentage, and monetary assets.

The Pivoine exists in the middle and high sections, and all Pivoine members receive various special treatments from the school.

In the primary section, we instead have the Petite Pivoine. Once Petite Pivoine members enter the middle school section, they become Pivoine members.

Because it comprises only purebred Suiran students, no matter how great your lineage, parentage or assets are, if you enter Suiran during the middle or high school sections, it's impossible to join.

A society that only the chosen can enter; truly the adoration of all Suiran students.

And I, Kisshouin Reika, am naturally a member of the Petite Pivoine.

Hmm, Reika abused her authority as a Pivoine member and did whatever the heck she wanted in 『you are my dolce』 as well.

Just being a member of the Pivoine meant that most things were allowed.

But I really wonder about something like that being allowed in an institution that's supposed to teach its students how to live properly.

Pivoine members pin a peony badge under the Suiran crest on their uniform.

It's made from real gems, so it sparkles beautifully.

And at the same time, it functions as a school-wide pass for exemption from the rules.

...Once I considered that... although it was pretty, it felt a little scary too...

Ah, and as for why it's the 'Peony Society', apparently in the language of flowers, the peony means the "the bearing of a ruler".

...Honestly, there's just a lot of things scary about the way they think.

Being a Pivoine member means the other students look at you in half admiration, and half fear.

And that's natural. If you start trouble with a Pivoine student, it'll be hard for you to keep going to school here.

And their families would also be pressured by the people behind the Pivoine members, sometimes even harmed.

Basically *'If you know what's best for you, don't get involved with the Pivoine'*.

I also want to follow that rule.

But well, that's impossible, huh. I'm a member after all. And I'm in really deep.

Aah, so scary. And what's even scarier is their sense of money.

I mean, when I was in high school my monthly allowance was only 5,000 yen, so I can't help but see money differently, right?

Just how much money are they giving to these primary schoolers? It's already gone past the level of 'pocket money' into the realm of 'living expenses'.

Well, I'm the same though.

Anyway, the point is, thanks to my family's influence and money, I'm fairly comfortable at school.

No, calling it "fairly" is being extravagant, I guess. I'm *extremely* comfortable at school.

Even though I'm only a Year 1 student, I've already got followers after all.

These girls were Reika's followers in 『you are my dolce』 as well, weren't they.

Have they been currying favour this far back?

Even though they're only six years old, they already know how to get ahead in life, huh~

Aah, what a harsh world this is. Even children are having it rough.

But if I had to be a bit greedy, I'd prefer friends over followers.

Hm? 『you are my dolce』 didn't have any "Kisshouin Reika's friend" characters either. Could it be that I'm going to stay friendless like this?

Ah-, oh no. Tears are...

The manga only began when the protagonist entered the high school section so I don't know what kind of school life Reika lived before that.

But I'll bet she looked down on people beneath her in her "Reika Pose" with left hand on hip, and laughing into the back of her right hand, doing whatever she pleased.

All whilst following Emperor about.

But the current me will absolutely not do the same. After all, I can hear destruction's footsteps on my door.

And also I honestly don't have the nerves to go "OOOHOHOHO" as anything but a joke. Even I know what shame is.

But well, I get the feeling that in a school like Suiran, plenty of other students will be using the Reika Pose...

CHAPTER 3

Now then, the Pivione has its own salon inside the school grounds.

A luxurious room that's already gone way past a school room, and is more like the living room in a royal suite in some first class hotel.

What's more, it even has its own exclusive concierge.

The Petit Pivione salon is inside the primary school section, and as a member I need to show my face there.

If I never associate with the Pivione even though I was privileged enough to be chosen, it's quite possible that the backlash would make me some enemies.

When it comes to human relationships and contact, communication is important.

Honestly, I don't actually hate going to the salon. There's yummy sweets after all, and I even hear information about the school from my upperclassmen.

If that was all it was, then I might have been happier to go there.

But the salon has "that person".

"that person"

Right, Kaburagi Masaya, the Emperor.

To begin with, the Kaburagi family is a group that has hands in businesses around the world. A wealthy clan that leads Japan.

And of course, just like the Kisshouin family, they've inherited blood from former nobles.

In terms of peerage, the Kaburagi are apparently higher ranked though.

Apparently some of their ancestors had a really esteemed lineage.

Honestly, we're not on the same stage...

No flaws in any aspects. A perfect clan. That's the Kaburagi.

And the direct descendent of that lofty family is Kaburagi Masaya.

The boy himself has already displayed the necessary calibre to inherit the family. Even though he's only a Year 1 student, he already has this aura that makes people want to obey, and when he glares over the people with this beautiful face that reminds you of a blue flame, he really does seem like an emperor.

Even right this very moment, he's sitting boldly in a special seat like it's natural. Even the idea of giving this seat up to somebody else doesn't seem to occur to him. As expected of the Emperor.

Just like bees gathering around honey, people are gathered around Kaburagi Masaya. And he's paying almost no concern to them, and is instead looking out the window in boredom.

Just what kind of upbringing would you need to raise a six year old so bored of life. A sovereign's upbringing? If you give a child a sovereign's upbringing, is this what they turn into?

If it's that boring, how about you go outside and play some dodgeball or tag? But well, unfortunately there are no such children in the Suiran schoolyard.

I wonder if this kid can actually play like a normal child. The image of Kaburagi Masaya going kyaa kyaa kyaa on a unicycle comes to mind.

Uu-pfft-pfft, just imagining it is funny.

Or so I was thinking as I was watching him from a distance when he suddenly looked me right in the eyes.

Geh-, he's frowning at me. Could it be that he read my mind!?

Hieeeeeee, I'M SORRY, I'M SORRY!

Faking the body language of somebody thinking *"My! I have suddenly remembered something I needed to do in the classroom. I must return at once!"* and then casually, CASUALLY, averting my eyes from him, I left the salon like nothing happened.

S-, Scary. I couldn't find the courage to look back.

"Reika-sama, did you go to the Petit Pivione salon?"

When I returned to the classroom, a girl from my class spoke to me.

"Yes. I had some tea."

Another girl came to my side and asked,

"Umm, was Kaburagi-sama there?"

with a blush on her face.

"Yes. He was in fact there."

"My!"

The girls began kicking up a fuss, going *kyaa kyaa*!

These girls aren't members of the Pivione, and Kaburagi Masaya is in a different class to us, so they haven't really had many chances to get close to him.

"Are you close with Kaburagi-sama, Reika-sama? What kind of conversations do you have in the salon?"

I'm not close, and I'm not planning on getting close.

"Kaburagi-sama is a taciturn person, and I have basically never spoken to him. Most of the time I chat with the upperclassmen Oneesamas after all."

"My, is that so..."

The girls immediately lost their excitement.

Mm~mm, I'm sorry. If possible I'd love to tell you some wonderful stories too, but this has to do with my future, so.

"I'm sorry. I couldn't meet your expectations. Ah-, but he *was* eating chocolate. Perhaps he is fond of sweet things."

For these depressed girls, I tried my best to reveal the fruits of my observation. It's nothing big, but how about it?

"Wahh, Kaburagi-sama eating chocolate. I want to seee."

"I love chocolate too. I'm just like Kaburagi-sama!"

"If he likes chocolate then I'd better prepare some high class stuff for Valentine's!"

Ooh, they liked it more than expected.

For now, I'm glad that they're happy.

But isn't it a bit early to be thinking about Valentine's?

"To think that you girls would try to ask Reika-sama about Kaburagi-sama."

"Honestly, how rude."

Oh! It's Kisshouin Reika's followers #1 and #2.

Kazami Serika-chan and Imamura Kikuno-chan.

In Kimidol they also adored Emperor together with Reika and chased him around, but it seems that they're already fans of his in primary school.

They're acting like they're angry for my sake, but they actually just don't like the fact that other girls get to hear stories about him too.

They're my followers so I guess they want me to give them exclusive information.

"It was unbecoming of me to carelessly spread rumours about Kaburagi-sama. Serika-san, Kikuno-san, I'm sorry as well."

"Ah-, no-"

"For Reika-sama to apologise,"

The two of them panicked and followed up with a smile.

Since they're all fans, wouldn't it be fine to just happily talk about their idol(Kaburagi Masaya) together?

Later, I'll make sure to tell the two of them what brand of chocolate he was eating, so

I hope they get along with these girls.

CHAPTER 4

gokigen'yoh: if you haven't experienced marimite or anything featuring a lot of rich girls, 'gokigen'yoh' is basically the 'hello' and 'goodbye' for rich girls.

“Reika-ojousama, welcome home.”

A car from my family came to pick me up at school.

It was to avoid abductions and the like, and with study and practice materials already onboard, I headed to my afterschool lessons instead of home.

The life of an ojousama is hectic.

After school I almost always go to practice of some sort.

Unlike the children going to public primary schools in their neighbourhood, the students at my school all live at different places, so to begin with we couldn't just leave our stuff and go play together, but even without that everybody was busy with lessons, so after school it was just 'gokigen'yoh'.

Now then, today's lessons are for flower arrangement and piano.

“I have returned.”

Aahh, so tired. It really is hard studying two things at the same time.

Piano is pretty fun in its own way, but flower arrangement is...

Honestly, it's all one's sense in aesthetics for that.

Once again, my flower arrangement was a mess today, and it didn't turn out too well.

Apparently my arrangement didn't look complete to my teacher, because she asked

me what I was going to do next, but that was pretty much the limit for my pleb aesthetics, so no matter how much you ask, Teacher, nothing else will come of it you know?

In the end my teacher said, “Now wouldn’t it be better like this?” before plucking things out and rearranging it, and the end result was an arrangement that had nearly none of my work in it.

I’m sorry for being a poor student, Teacher.

After changing out of my uniform I headed to the living room and found that Oniisama had just returned home.

“Welcome home, Oniisama!”

“I’m back, Reika.”

Right. I didn’t know it, but Kisshouin Reika had a brother, you know.

To begin with, Kisshouin Reika only appeared as a villainess, so unlike the protagonist or the Emperor, we never got to learn much about her family.

At most, her parents appeared a little during the engagement incident.

And the readers didn’t want to know to begin with.

Ah-, tears are...

“Oniisama, were you at club activities today?”

“Yeah, that’s right.”

My brother Kisshouin Takateru is 13 years old, and 7 years my elder. Right now he’s in his second year of Suiran’s middle school section.

He's in the kyudo club, and goes there a few times a week.

Takateru-oniisama is such a gentle and upright person that I couldn't believe that he was *that* Reika's sibling.

"Your private tutor is coming after dinner tonight, right? Then until dinner, won't you listen to my story?"

I love Oniisama.

In my past life(? Can we just settle on it being my past life? This is getting annoying.) I only had a little sister, so I can't help but having an older brother that spoils me.

"Sure. What do you want to talk about? How was your day, Reika?"

Oniisama patted the seat next to him while he said that, so I immediately sat down next to him like a doggy being called by its master.

"Today I had piano and flower arrangement practice, you see."

I happily told him about how piano was fun, and how I messed up in flower arrangement.

Today Oniisama wasn't doing quite so well at kyudo club, so,

"Oniisama, shoot this fan do~wn."

I said, as I waved a fan made from a magazine I found on the table.

"Nasu no Yoichi? You sure know some difficult stuff for being so little, huh."

He was a little surprised.

Hmm? I can't tell what common knowledge is for a Year 1 student.

After I had dinner with my family, Oniisama returned to his room with his tutor and began to study, so I sat down in the living room to spend some time with my parents.

"How was school, Reika?"

"It was fun."

"Reika-san, how was the Pivoine?"

"Everybody was wonderful, and made for good models."

After I entered primary school, Okaasama stopped using -chan with me and switched to -san instead.

I'm her daughter so she could just call me Reika, but apparently this is how people do it in high society.

Okaasama is from Kyoto, so she never went to Suiran, and because of that, it seems that she's fixated on it, and the Pivoine in particular.

With her own daughter as a Suiran member, and what's more, a Pivoine member, apparently she couldn't help but feel proud.

Whenever I talk about the Pivoine, just like I am now, she looks as happy as she can be.

"Speaking of the Pivoine, have you become close with Masaya-kun of the Kaburagi family?"

“Eh-”

Otousama looked at me with expectant eyes.

“No, not particularly. That personage is only close to certain friends of his.”

When I said that, Otousama looked obviously disappointed.

Otousama is trying to use Reika to become friendly with the Kaburagi family, isn't he. Perhaps her father's influence is part of the reason that even after being coldly rejected multiple times, Reika never stopped chasing Emperor in Kimidol. Of course it also had to do with Reika's natural disposition though.

However, Father! Destruction visits the overly ambitious, you know!

No, seriously, we really will be crushed, so Otousama, for now please just stop your dishonest management.

CHAPTER 5

In the Suiran primary section, the results of the tests we regularly have aren't published.

When we enter the middle school section, the top 20 students overall, and in each subject are pasted up on a board, and each student is privately told what their ranking is, but even that doesn't happen in the primary section.

There's a report card at least, but it's all based on a non-relative evaluation, so it isn't really dependable.

Because of that you don't get a good idea of how everybody else is doing. Nor do you get a good idea of how you yourself stand in the school.

Most of the girls who attend Suiran from the primary section tend to enter a political marriage after graduating from university, or find work through their parents' connections, or go looking for somebody to marry, so basically none of them will really give it their all studying.

But I'm different!

I haven't incurred Emperor's wrath as of this moment, but I can't ignore the possibility that by some chance I butt heads with the protagonist in high school and anger the Emperor, and end up having my whole family destroyed.

And it seems that the pattern of 'Father's dishonesty coming to light' → 'people demand Father's resignation' → 'our assets are seized' → 'our family falls into ruin' is set pretty firmly.

Aahh, Otousama, please turn over a new leaf. (Although I don't actually know if he is doing anything dishonest. It's fine even if it's a false charge!)

If our family falls into ruin then I probably won't have anyone to marry after all, so I need to earn my own living expenses.

To that end, I need to study.

In preparation for if I don't have the fees to pay for a private university, I want to have enough academic ability to get into a national or public university.

In the future, I want to make enough money not just for me, but to take care of my parents as well.

Because of all this, I asked my parents to let me go to cram school.

"You are a girl, so isn't there no need to study so hard?"

As expected, Okaasama was negative.

'How about flute or violin instead?' she suggested.

Incidentally, Otousama completely leaves child-raising to Okaasama. He's completely useless at times like this.

"But Okaasama, I find studying very interesting."

Hm~mm, I wonder if that was too weak an excuse.

Well then,

"When we enter the middle school section, talented people from other schools will enter. When that happens, I will be left behind."

Just to make sure, I added, "Even though I am a Pivoine member, to have something so shameful happen is..." which made her eyebrows twitch.

"Pivoine" is like a magic word when it comes to her.

"You're right. Then shall I find you a private tutor?"

That would be troubling! I don't want a tutor, I want to go to cram school.

Besides becoming smarter, I have one other goal too.

“I want to go to cram school. I want to see how people from other schools are doing as well.”

I bend my upper body forward as I begged her.

I had to go to so much infant class before I got into Suiran, so can't you just let me go to cram school as well!

“But as a daughter of the Kisshouin household, there shouldn't be any need to get along with ordinary children. And what's more, in a place like that, there are children from public schools too. It would be terrible if they hurt the cute little you.”

It's here. That sense of being a class of chosen ones.

She's saying stuff like “You need to choose who you associate with, okay?”.

Didn't the Kisshouin Reika in kimidol turn out to be that useless rich girl because she chose who to associate with?

“It is fine, Okaasama. I will just be going there to study. I will make sure to remember your teachings, Okaasama.”

I'm a little irritated as somebody who once went to a public primary school, but I'll endure here, endure.

“Okay? Please, Okaasama.”

I clasped my hands together in front of my chest like I was praying.

How's this? My 'Cute Daughter Begging Beam'!

“Isn’t it fine?”

OOOHH! Sudden reinforcements from the rear!

Hearing our conversation, Oniisama supported me.

“It’s not often that you get somebody who wants to study. What if she went to the cram school that I attended when I was in primary? The lessons there are thorough and easy to understand, you know?”

The cram school that Oniisama went to! That sounds really reliable!

How about it, Okaasama. Even Oniisama is supporting the idea. Come, come! Give me a positive reply!

After looking at the two of us and giving a small sigh, Okaasama said,

“I understand. Then tomorrow I will take care of the enrolment.”

YAHOOOOO!

Hooray! Hooray! I can go to cram school!

“Thank you, Okaasama!”

I couldn’t hold back the smile from inside me.

With this, my dream will come true...

“Oniisama, thank you for earlier.”

While we were returning to our rooms from the living room, I chased behind Oniisama in the hallway and thanked him.

As expected of my kind Oniisama~

Uhuhu.

“It wasn’t much. More importantly, I know that you really want to go to cram school for some reason, but I wonder if you have some other motive as well.”

-creak-

Was it that easy to tell?

“Mm~mm, if I study at home I’ll probably just relax and get lazy~ And I want to become close to kids outside of Suiran too, so~”

While my eyes swam about in a corner, I somehow managed to wring that out.

“Hm~mm.”

Oniisama looked right at me for a while, but when I began to pout,

“I got it, I got it. Let’s go with that then.”

After giving me two pats on the head, Oniisama smiled.

So you’ll be understanding, Oniisama?

“But you know, Reika.”

Oniisama brought his face close to my ears.

“When people lie, they look to the top right, you know.”

And then with a smile, Oniisama said “Well then, good night.” before returning to his own room.

Eh-, what was that just now?

Gosh, what a scary 13 year old. Why does he know something like that?

Could it be that the kind and gentle Oniisama is actually a crafty type?

Like, what if he knew how to see through lies to hide his own lies.

Oniisama, please stay as my mental oasis.

Anyway, from now on I'll be careful when I lie...

CHAPTER 6

Again, let it be noted that 'healing' or 'soothing' is a very, very common term in Japanese for things that sooth the heart, whether through gentleness or cuteness.

Also fujoshi = women that enjoy imagining BL pairings, and literally means 'rotten woman'. It's a pun/homophone for 'lady with class' (婦女子) :

In the end, the plan was for me to attend cram school starting the end of the summer holidays in September.

Not only is it a clean time to join, but it matches up with the schedule of the curriculum too.

There's still two months until September, but I won't say anything greedy.

As you'd expect they'd be suspicious if I insisted on going right this moment after all.

I sure am looking forward to it.

But first is summer break!

As a wealthy primary school, they didn't give us any dull holiday homework like writing an observation diary of a morning glory.

Although I actually quite like raising morning glories and sponge gourds and the like. Tsk.

"Where are you going during the summer break, Reika-sama?"

Also, since the summer holidays are a few weeks long, the entire school is excited.

Follower #1, Serika-chan seemed to be really looking forward to it, just like Follower #2 Kikuno-chan was.

And of course I was too!

“I am going to Tahiti with my family.”

“My, how lovely!”

Beaches really are the best in summer, aren't they!

I've already bought a new swim suit, so I'll show them the swimming skills of the Japanese!

“As soon as the holidays begin, my family is going to our holiday home. After that, is Hawaii.”

Hearing Serika-chan say this, Kikuno added,

“My family is going to Hawaii as well! Perhaps we'll meet over there!”

“Eeh-, really!?”

Their eyes sparkled at the unexpected coincidence, and began comparing their itineraries and destinations.

Looking across the classroom, all my other classmates were excitedly talking about their travel plans as well.

People often say that the moments leading up to the trip are the most fun, but it really does look like it.

You just look forward to it so much.

But from what I hear, almost all of them are going overseas. Apparently this school doesn't have any kids that go to the beach at Chiba or Kanagawa...

In my old life, they were my family's standard beach trip spots.

Aah, I miss the grilled corn that I ate at Bousou in Chiba. **-drools-**

“Speaking of which, have you heard? They say that Kaburagi-sama is going to the Mediterranean sea.”

Serika-chan whispered with a smile, like she saved that best bit for last.

Hmm, the Mediterranean huh.

“I’ll bet they’re going to stay at a hotel owned by the Kaburagi Group, and spend almost all of the holidays overseas. I don’t think I’ll be able to handle not seeing his face for a whole month.”

Serika-chan spoke happily about Emperor, and then spoke sadly about not being able to meet him. To that, Kikuno-chan replied,

“I’ll bet he’s going together with Enjou-sama. Aah, if only I could go to the Mediterranean with those two.”

These two have a good grasp of Kaburagi’s information even though they’re in different classes. As expected of the fan network.

“You two sure are informed.” I praised, but they told me that it was natural to know at least that much.

Is that how it is?

But still, Enjou Shuusuke is going on vacation with Emperor?

Those two sure have been getting along from way back, huh.

In 『you are my dolce』, Enjou Shuusuke was a character introduced as Emperor’s

childhood and current friend, and supported the protagonist's romance with Emperor. There were few people who could speak with Emperor on even terms, and one time when the protagonist and Emperor had a disagreement, Enjou Shuusuke even rebuked him.

Unlike Emperor with his cold and overpowering atmosphere, Enjou who always mediated with a soft smile was popular as a 'soothing' character amongst the readers. And amongst the more 'rotten' women, he was treated as Emperor's bride...

But when it came to anybody who tried to harm his friend the Emperor, he became quite harsh. There were even times when he was harsher than Emperor, huh~ And of course Kisshouin Reika was an enemy to him, and occasionally she would be brutally cut down.

Even now I sometimes see them together in the Petite Pivoine or the hallway, and it seems that their relationship is already just like the manga's.

If I recall, they were supposed to have attended kindergarten together as well.

If it's just the faces, I was in Team Enjou.

In the coloured illustrations he had honey-coloured hair, and was just like a prince.

When I first enrolled and I saw his black hair, boy was I shocked.

'Was that honey dyed!? Was that hair colour non-natural!?' I thought.

But that makes sense I guess. He wasn't a half-Japanese character, so of course he couldn't have that hair colour.

'Did he dye his hair at some point? Did he suddenly have a honey-dyed make over? What did everyone around him think?'

I'll be looking forward to seeing what happens, while smirking inside a little.

Speaking of which, is hair dye okay in this school?

The Pivoine is going to have their customary summer party.

In the end, it's mostly for the real Pivoine, and we Petites are just tagging along.
But since they sent us invitations as well, lately the salon's been filled with talk about the party.

The girls have been talking about what dresses they're going to wear.

And as for me, I'm looking forward to it too.

I mean, it sounds so fun, right!?

Picture it; a dazzling hall with Oneesamas in beautiful dresses, being escorted by all the Oniisamas.

And in the middle of the hall are people doing the waltz.

Just watching it alone sounds fun!

The drawings in the manga were gorgeous too.

The protagonist got bullied by Kisshouin Reika and the followers though...

I ended up remembering something nasty.

Well, whatever. Let's get back in gear and think about fun things.

I heard that Kaburagi Masaya won't be in Japan this year, so while he's gone I'll enjoy the Pivoine!

CHAPTER 7

The trip was fun.

When I saw the blue sea in front of the hotel, my mood shot up.

Naturally we stayed at suite rooms. I was in a suite with Oniisama, with separate bedrooms on either side of the living room.

My parents went sunbathing on the beach and to beauty salons and stuff, and almost never went to the beach.

Ridiculous. Going to the beach and not swimming? What on earth are you doing here!

At times like this I'm glad I have an older sibling.

He can act as both my guardian as well as somebody I can drag to the beach as my playmate.

I invited Oniisama to the beach from the very morning, and indulged myself in the sea. I did stuff like snorkeling, as well as clinging to Oniisama's shoulders and swimming like a baby turtle.

Oniisama is actually already in his second year of middle school, so he should have actually found it boring to play with his little sister though.

Maybe he actually wanted to invite his close friends like Kaburagi Masaya did, but in that case I would be myself, so he probably held back.

I got a little ahead of myself and started swimming boldly. Well, even professionals make mistakes, so I drowned a little, but Oniisama came to save me in a panic. That was a good memory too.

I *did* put on sunscreen, but I turned pitch black anyway, so Okaasama was like The Scream when she saw me.

After coming back from the trip and basking in the good memories, I also had more piano lessons and concentrated for the autumn recital, as well as other lessons as well,

and also going to family gatherings and stuff too, and because each and every day just seemed to have something planned, I spent all my time busily, and before I knew it the holidays were almost over and the summer party was just ahead.

“Reika, are you ready?”

Having finished his preparations first, Oniisama waited for me by my room.

“Yeees!”

Today was my first summer party, so I was being escorted by Oniisama, a middle section Pivoine member.

How reassuring.

“Your dress is cute. It suits you well. Is that a real flower in your hair?”

Ehehe.

Geez, Oniisama. What a silver tongue you have.

I also quite like this dress. When I first saw this sherbet green flare dress in the shop, I was taken by it at a glance.

It's summer-ey, and really cute.

I bought it before the trip so I thought *“Isn't my atmosphere kind of ephemeral? Muhuhu.”* when it went with my pale skin, but because of this unexpected tan the image has gone a bit off. But still, isn't this child-like healthiness also quite good?

Okaasama had gone to buy this dress with me. She looked a little crestfallen when she saw me just now, but I'll pretend I didn't see that.

I had my hair done at a salon, and in place of a hair accessory I had a fresh white flower placed in.

Aah, I feel like a princess.

I'm really starting to feel like a stylish girl.

Honestly, I can't stop my smirking anymore, you know?

I mean I'm wearing my favourite dress, and I'll be going to the summer party!

But this kind of smile isn't very ladylike, so I need to be careful.

Still, my cheek muscles won't listen to me. **-smirk smirk-**

"Shall we go then?"

"Yes!"

A car was taking us all the way to the hotel venue, so I was fine even with these heeled sandals on.

Aah, I'm so excited~

"Hey, hey, Oniisama. Won't you tell me about the summer party?"

"Again? Didn't I talk about it just recently? We're almost there, so you can see it for yourself."

Oniisama gave a wry smile, but I couldn't help it. I just really want to know.

I feel bad for making Oniisama have the same conversation over and over again though.

The meeting place was a hall on the first floor in a hotel in the middle of the city, and the room faced a private garden so you could relax on the terrace.

According to Oniisama, there was a really pretty rose arch in that garden.

"It's a garden I think you'd like, Reika." he said.

The summer party usually began during the evening, but given how late the summer sun set, it was apparently possible to enjoy the garden in both the sunlight and the

night lights.

“We must definitely go to the garden! Okay?”

“Yes, yes.”

The food is being served as stand-up buffet, but there are also tables and chairs for people who want to sit down and eat properly.

But most people attended to socialise, so nobody actually sat down to eat a lot, Oniisama said.

What a waste~ It's cuisine from a high-class restaurant too!

When I was planning on going to a buffet in my past life I would fast all day so that I could eat to my heart's content, too...

I mean, in my mind *'buffet = eat until you die!'* after all...

Speaking of which, I often went with my friend to dessert buffets, didn't I. Each time I went with the goal of conquering every dish they offered, but not once did I get around to them all, huh~

...I wonder if everybody is doing well...

“Reika?”

Hah-! No good, no good. I went into my own little world.

I'd better make sure not to think about anything unnecessary.

“It's exciting, isn't it, Oniisama.”

After all, I'm Kisshouin Reika now.

CHAPTER 8

People were already gathering at the hall.

“Fuwahh~”

A stupid sound escaped me because of how moved I was.

The hall was overflowing with Oneesamas in fluttering dresses of various colours. Together with the vivid rings of flowers decorating the hall here and there, the room was like a sea of flowers.

Although the Oniisamas weren't dressed as gorgeously as the Oneesamas, they were dreamy in their formal attire too.

Hahh, so this is the Pivoine Summer Party that everybody adores.

It's like everything is glittering!

To begin with, almost all the guests here were students from Suiran, so the place was filled with youth.

I've been to various parties as the daughter of the Kisshouin family before, but they were focused around the Ojisamas and Obasamas of the upper class, so they just stressed me out and weren't fun at all.

Because I was still a child, I tried my best to avoid going.

Apparently my parents wanted to bring me with them though.

“Reika? Are you okay?”

Oh gosh. Did I leave my mouth open?

I hurriedly put my fallen 'ojousama mask' back on.

“I am fine, Oniisama. But please make sure to stay by my side, okay?”

Although we were only supposed to be lightly linking arms, I was firmly wrapped around.

Sorry if it gets your jacket wrinkly, Oniisama.

But if I let my guard down, I’m confident that I’ll end up lost while my eyes are glued on something.

“Look, Oniisama. Everything is sparkling so radiantly.”

“Isn’t it just the reflections from the chandelier? It’s thanks to the calculated lighting.”

Please don’t pour cold water over a maiden’s dreams.

Now that the party had begun, everybody was chatting and smiling with a glass in hand, so I quickly invited Oniisama to come look at the rose arc with me.

“I wish to see it before the sun sets! You recommended it to me, didn’t you?”

“Yes, yes.”

Oniisama escorted me out onto the terrace and furthest back in the garden with a small white fountain and tables sets... There it was! A rose arch!

It’s even cuter than I imagined!

The arc decorated with red roses was tied by ribbons of white chiffon, and blowing in the wind made it look like a wedding veil.

And at the top was a bell!

I want to ring it!

“Oniisama! Could it be that it’s one of those bells that grants you happiness if you ring it!?”

“I wonder. I haven’t heard that, but... You want to ring it?”

“Uu-”

With such a cute bell, anybody would want to ring it, right!?

I wonder if I can’t. There are lots of people around me, after all.

Would I look like a bumpkin?

“Come.”

Oniisama took me by the hand and brought me in front of the arch.

“Excuse me. It seems that my younger sister would like to ring the bell. Would that be all right with you?”

Oniisama spoke to the senpai closest to the bell.

The senpai happily gave the spot to us, and Oniisama urged me forward. But. With all these people watching now, ringing it needs courage—!

Oniisama sure has guts~

But they went out of their way to give me this chance. I guess I’ll take advantage of everyone’s good will and ring it?

It’s embarrassing by myself, so I’ll do it together with Oniisama.

Oniisama was making a complicated expression, but I won’t mind it.

When the two of us rang the bell, somebody said “My, it’s like a pair of newlyweds at their wedding.” and Oniisama made an even more complicated expression. Don’t mind it.

Apparently girls from the primary section saw me happily ringing the bell because they gathered here and wanted to ring it too.

Right? Right?

I knew it. Everyone actually wanted to ring it. It's because I did the embarrassing thing of going first that they had the courage to do so, right?

Good job, me.

After having my fill of the rose arch I returned inside to find that people in the middle of the room were dancing the waltz!

Party! Waltz!

"Oniisama,"

Sensing something from me, Oniisama averted his face and tried to head to the buffet corner.

But he had his arm linked to the unmoving me.

"Oniisama, it's the waltz."

"Don't wanna."

An immediate reply?

As a daughter of the upper class, I take ballroom dance classes as well.

Apparently Oniisama isn't taking them now, but of course he took them in the past.

Since he went to the trouble of learning it, wouldn't he want a chance to put it to use?

Otherwise what did he learn it for, right?

After ringing the bell on the rose arch I've been on an odd sort of high.

Normally I'd be too embarrassed to decide to dance of my own accord.

“Just one song, Oniisama. Okay? Okay?”

Please say yes. It’s to make good memories for your cute little sister.

“Hahh...”

Oniisama gave a big sigh before dropping his head dejectedly.

“Just one song, okay?”

YAYYYY!

The orchestra’s song flowed through the hall.

One, two, three. One, two, three.

Straightenn your back. Don’tt lower your arms. Now! One, two, three. One, two, three.

While recalling my teacher’s lessons, I span around, and around.

The chandelier up on the ceiling sparkled with light.

The hem of my favourite dress danced in the air.

Aahh, this is so much fun. It’s like a dream.

CHAPTER 9

In Japanese, you refer to other people's family members by their title. Like, "How is Okaasan?" means "How is your mother?". Imouto-san and Otouto-san are standard polite-ish ways of referring to other people's younger siblings.

We finished the one dance we agreed on, and as I was thinking about how fun that had been, my gaze clicked in place with someone else's.

And in that instant, I turned to stone.

I tripped on my own legs because of the shock and almost fell, and then Oniisama immediately caught me, but more importantly,

WHY IS KABURAGI MASAYA HERE———!!

Even though they weren't supposed to be in Japan for the entire holiday, standing right here were Kaburagi Masaya and Enjou Shuusuke—.

How long have they been there? How much did they see?

Weren't you two supposed to be in the Mediterranean?

It's because I thought you weren't in Japan! It's because I was relieved that you wouldn't be here that I casually did something eyecatching as being the only little kid dancing here!

If I knew you guys were gunna come I definitely wouldn't have stood out so much!

"Reika?"

Calm yourself. Calm yourself.

For now let's leave aside the reason why they're here even though they're not

supposed to be, and figure out how to naturally leave the area.

First I'll remove my gaze from those cursed eyes, and undo the Petrification spell.

Naturally, naturally...

GYAH-! Even though I was supposed to move just my eyes, my neck turned by itself—! Doesn't this look like I turned my head in scorn now? Will he think I'm picking a fight with him!?

Can't be helped. What's already been done can't be helped. I'll just naturally leave the area.

GYAH-! My knees won't bend! I'm walking like a soldier now—!

Maybe those cursed eyes attacked my brain because I can't stop all these involuntary movements.

Aahh, what do I dooo?

"Reika, are you listening? Reika—"

Anyway, I need to slip into the crowd and disappear, or else. I'll make a beeline for the drink corner since it has the most people.

[Monotone:] I am not particularly paying any special attention to you, all right? My throat has simply become parched from the dancing, and I have begun to desire a drink.

[Monotone:] Indeed. That is simply it.

[Monotone:] You, over there. May I have some juice?

"Reika!"

Somebody struck me on the back and dispelled the Confusion spell.

Aahh, I went completely weird just now.

Thanks for returning my sanity, Oniisama.

Casting both Confusion and Petrification at once. As expected of a last boss.

“What’s wrong? You’ve been a little strange.”

Mn, I’m more aware of that than anyone.

“Oniisama, I am going to make a small trip to the restroom.”

I want to be alone for a little to reset myself.

I want to hole up in the toilet and calm myself down.

All the reflecting I need to do comes after that.

“Are you okay? Are you not feeling well? Should I have somebody go with you?”

“No, I am fine.”

“Hmm, but...”

Perhaps I was being pretty suspicious because Oniisama seemed to be worried.

I’m sorry for worrying you, Oniisama.

“Sup, Takateru.”

“Imari.”

With good timing, somebody who seemed to be his friend called out him, so I’ll leave while I can.

“It is nice to meet you. I am his sister, Reika. Oniisama, I will be fine by myself, so please excuse me for a little.”

Giving friend-san a quick bow, it's now time to GO!

"What's wrong with Imouto-chan? She seemed to be in quite a hurry."

"Ahh, the toilet."

Don't say it!

I rushed into the dressing room, and after entering a private room, I collapsed onto the seat.

Haah—.

I suddenly felt tired.

It was like the excitement from just now had been a lie.

...That surprised me.

Why were they here?

Was that stuff about them staying in the Mediterranean all holiday just nonsense?

I even heard at the Petite Pivoine that they were going to miss out on the summer party.

Still, that expression.

It sure was scary.

It was like he saw me happily dancing the waltz and thinking, *'What the hell is this girl doing?'*

I definitely came off as some ugly chick who thought of herself as hot stuff!

If I knew he was going to come, I wouldn't have gotten ahead of myself and waltzed!

"Hey, Masaya-sama was there, wasn't he. Wasn't he supposed to be skipping this party?"

While I was in the pits of depression, I heard the voices of some girls who were probably older than me.

I think they might be from the middle or high school section.

“Right. He was actually supposed to spend the whole holiday overseas, but I heard he came back early enough to make Yurie-sama’s birthday.”

“My, is that so? My younger sister was making a huge fuss about Masaya-sama being there. But with Yurie-sama as the rival, she really doesn’t stand a chance.”

“Huhu! Isn’t it still too early to say? She’s your own sister, so you need to cheer for her. It looks like there are lots of rivals though.”

“True. My, Maika-sama. Gokigen’yoh.”

“Gokigen’yoh.”

Apparently they stopped talking because yet another acquaintance came in, but with this, the mystery was solved.

So it was Yurie-sama’s birthday!

Suzushino Yurie-sama is Emperor and Enjou’s four years elder childhood friend, and shockingly, Emperor’s first love.

In 『you are my dolce』, Yurie-sama was a dignified and radiant beauty who was admired by all the girls in Suiran.

Kisshouin Reika admired her as well.

Since Reika also admired Yurie-sama who detested the unjust, I don’t think it would’ve hurt if she learnt from her example a little, but Reika was a villainess character, so I guess it can’t be helped? How pitiful, Reika...

And so, Emperor loved her up until high school, but Yurie-sama had always thought of him as just a little brother.

In the end his love ended in an honourable defeat, and there was also a scene where he lashed out at the protagonist to vent, but before long his interest in the protagonist turned into love, and he completely got over his first one.

But even so, Yurie-sama was a childhood friend who was like an older sister, and as a special existence to Emperor. Being a person filled with independence, when she graduated from university she stood her ground against her parents, and when she decided on her own to go overseas to look for work in an American company, Emperor lent his help in convincing them.

When Yurie-sama was about to leave for America, he said, "If you ever need me, I'll always come to help. No matter where you are, Yurie," and the readers remembered her as somebody who would always be special to him.

When the protagonist saw this, she did get nervous and say "Is he actually still in love with Yurie-san?" though.

Being who she is, if Yurie-sama had a birthday, of course he came back. I understand it now.

Even in the Petite Pivoine, whenever he speaks to Yurie-sama he always breaks into a smile after all.

He always goes Yurie, Yurie, and tries to get her attention doesn't he.

First love, huhh? It sure is bittersweet. Mmn, but that love never bears fruit, does it. Aah, how sad.

Considering how I sneakily observe those two and get all excited about somebody else's love affairs, my personality is pretty bad, isn't it.

But welllll, at any rate, I now know why Kaburagi Masaya is here when he isn't supposed to be.

There's no use crying over spilt milk.

I can't change the fact that he saw me doing the waltz.

...Let's forget about it.

I'll consider this some dark history and sink it into the swamps of my heart. Mn.

"Upsie daisies."

Now then, I've probably worried Oniisama as well, so I'll head back.

I spent too long in the toilet, didn't I. What am I going to do if they get the wrong impression, and my honour as a maiden is besmirched?

Should I really drive in the fact that my stomach is completely fine?

CHAPTER 10

Tsukemono are a Japanese pickle used as a side dish.

Also Japanese apparently have a dish that's basically leftovers and bread. Sometimes it's eaten like a sandwich, but recently(ish) they have taken to selling it as its own dish, and baking various ingredients into the dough itself.

With the summer break over, I entered term two and began going to cram school like I had hoped.

Oniisama used to go here so it should be quite good. Apparently it's a really high level cram school, filled with students from private schools and high level national schools. Completely different from the cram school I went to in my old life, which had but flyers going for it...

At the moment we're only learning Japanese and arithmetic so following the lessons is no problem at all. Rather, this feeling of invincibility is amazing.

Well, it's just Year 1 work after all. It would be a problem if I *didn't* understand.

One of the reasons I wanted to go to cram school was of course in preparation for my future, but it was the other reason that was the important one.

Eating sweets.

I do go to a few different lessons, but the Kisshouin chauffeur takes me to all of them. They drop me off in front of the classroom before the lessons begin, and pick me up in front of the classroom when the lesson ends.

Indeed! I have no time to move about freely!

To begin with, I can't even walk outside alone. Somebody is always by my side.

But that's troubling.

Why it's troubling is because I can't buy sweets to eat.

If you want to laugh at me for my gluttony, go ahead and laugh.

However! Each and every day, the sweets I get are all high class, and even my meals are always a menu like some high class restaurant's.

I *am* thankful, you know? It really is delicious, you know?

But this commoner's tongue from my old life wants junky snack food. It wants to eat simple stuff like tsukemono on plain rice. It wants to eat leftovers baked into bread!

And so I started thinking.

'Wouldn't it just be fine if I just went to a lesson where I didn't have an attendant?'

Cram school has a Japanese class, and then an arithmetic class; between those two classes is breaktime, you see.

'Couldn't I use that time to sneak out and secretly buy snacks?' I thought.

If possible, I wanted the cram school to be close to a convenience store.

If I sneak out too often, the teachers at cram school might find it a problem and report it to my parents, so I need to be careful when doing so.

I'll only buy things small enough to fit between my cram textbooks and into my bag.

No way will I ever get greedy and try buying something as big as potato chips. Even small packets are bulky because of the air in them.

And one day I'll buy onigiri too.

Whenever I started daydreaming about that, it became impossible to stop.

That's why I wanted to go to cram school no matter what.

There was a convenience store about 2 or 3 minutes walk from the cram school that Oniisama used to go to.

How splendid.

I was a newcomer, and on top of that a student from the famous Suiran, so I couldn't slip out due to the attention at first.

I go to cram school once a week now, and it was two months since I started attending that I was able to somehow sneak out to the convenience store—

The first thing I bought were two Tirolian chocolates and caramel.

I obviously couldn't leave the cram school with my bag, so I was limited to buying things that I could fit into my pockets.

We only get fifteen minutes break, so I had to hurry back.

The following 2 hour lesson didn't sink in at all.

When I returned home, the Tirolian chocolate that I secretly ate in my room tasted so nostalgic that I cried.

I took care to slowly enjoy the other Tirolian chocolate and 8 caramel pieces as well.

Cheap food, banzai.

In autumn we have stuff like the athletics carnival or the Suiran presentation day so it's busy. As for my private life, I have a piano recital as well. It's so hectic.

Naturally, the two tops of our grade, Kaburagi and Enjou flourished at the athletics carnival. They even overwhelmed some upperclassmen. Thanks to that, their fans increased, in the upper grades as well.

Unfortunately I couldn't become our class' hero. I'll try my best in other fields.

The Suiran presentation day is something like a cultural festival, so the place will be decorated with artwork created by the students, and we'll have a choir contest and a bazaar and stuff too.

It was much harder to prepare for presentation day than the athletics carnival, and so

in order to replenish my body, I would eat snacks at the Petite Pivoine in between preparations.

Being able to eat sweets on school grounds really is a special privilege.

Lately at the salon, it's all been talk about the choir programme or the artwork that each class has been creating.

The class artwork becomes harder as you go up a grade, so it's tough. Apparently in the upper years of the primary section, they even create dioramas and stuff.

"Reika-san, today we have Pierre Evan macarons, you know. Will you eat some?"

"Gosh. I definitely shall."

This person is an Onesama in Year 5, Minazuki Aira-sama.

Unique for a girl in Suiran, she has short hair and a bit of a boyish appearance, and gives the impression of growing up to be the lead male-role actor in an all-female theatre troupe somewhere.

Ever since Aira-sama saw me waltz with Oniisama at the summer party, she's been on good terms with me.

Apparently seeing me try my very best to dance was cute. I'm thankful that she feels that way.

She said stuff like "You have such a kind Oniisama. I sure am jealous." and although I didn't know where she got it from, she gave me a picture of Oniisama and I ringing the bell as a present.

As it turns out, apparently an acquaintance of Aira-sama had been there to take the picture.

"They were a lovely couple, so I wanted to give them a picture later." apparently.

Oniisama, they've decided we're a couple, you know?

I had thought it was a needless and huge embarrassment in front of Kaburagi Masaya and Enjou Shuusuke, but when one door shuts, another opens, huh.

—But there's just one very big problem with Aira-sama. That is...

"Yurie. This limited-time macaron is delicious, you know."

Right. Aira-sama is *that* Yurie-sama's good friend.

"Mn, then perhaps I'll have just one more. What about you two, Masaya, Shuusuke?"

"I'll have one."

"Hmm, I think I'll pass."

The spot next to Yurie-sama is almost always occupied by 'I ♥ YURIE' Kaburagi. And Yurie-sama and Aira-sama are close friends. And recently, there's been this underclassman that Aira-sama has taken a liking to; me.

I'm in a pretty dangerous position.

Lord Emperor basically pays no attention to anybody but the people he has an interest in, so up until now he's been completely disregarding me.

But one time when Enjou Shuusuke said "Oh, aren't you the girl from the summer party who did the waltz in the middle of the dance floor?" and Emperor went "Ah... *That* time." and looked my way.

Enjou Shuusuke, don't say unnecessary things!

"Masaya, are you making sure to properly help with your class' presentation?"

"...Well, I get around."

“That’s no good. You have to do it properly.”

“Aahh... Mn.”

“What’s with that response? I’m going to see you all the way to class. You know what to do, right?”

“I get it, already. You sure are noisy, Yurie.”

“What was that!?”

“Joking. Geez, sorry. You get angry so easily.”

I sneakily watched them as I munched on a macaron.

Despite his abusive tongue, he looks quite happy, doesn’t he. I see, I see. So *that’s* what you like?

Emperor is always smiling when he talks to Yurie-sama. Plenty of expressions, like a completely different person from that bored-looking and expressionless Emperor everywhere else.

Geez, look, isn’t he blushing too? Hey, your love is leaking outside, you know?

While I was observing this incredibly funny Emperor, I met eyes with Enjou.

I’m sorry, I won’t look anymore. I’ll still be eavesdropping on their flirting though.

Anyway, while all that was happening, my busy, but peaceful, autumn passed by.

CHAPTER 11

KISSHOVIN TAKATERU

I have a sister 7 years my junior.

Lately she's been acting strangely.

Because of her upbringing at the hands of my pampering parents, my sister was a wilful and brazen child.

Because mother was always around her, mother's influence affected her tastes and thoughts, and she turned into a miniature version of mother. As I watched all this happen with slightly cool eyes, I thought, 'At this rate she's going to turn out like those haughty rich girls at the school that I go to, isn't she'.

I do respect my parents, and I cherish my family too.

But my parents, and the way they look down on people below them is just something I can't get used to. Even though, it's those same people that they look down on who are the ones supporting our company, you know?

I'm the first son, and one day I'll take over the family and company.

When it happens, I might oppose my father's way of doing things.

Anyway, about my sister.

The girl that I thought was a miniature version of mother changed around the time she entered the primary section of my school.

How do I say this, she turned into an idiot. In a good way.

Should I call it innocent instead?

And she seems to be sneakily up to something.

Apparently her grades aren't bad. She's even diligently attending the lessons that she used to skip because she felt like it.

Even though she's only six, she knows right from wrong now, and occasionally she even says things that would be difficult for a child her age.

Seeing just this, you would think that she's a talented girl.

But well, she really does do weird things on occasion, and I find it a little funny.

Recently I've taken to observing my little sister.

My sister has always been attached to me, but recently her attachment has become quite intense.

Whenever she sees me, her face lights up and she runs to me. She's kind of like a puppy. Her invisible tail wags about.

And well, she's being this open about her attachment to me, and she's my real sister after all, so as you'd expect it's quite adorable.

And when I'm kind to her because of it, she gets even more attached.

The spot next to me on the sofa has basically become her default seat.

One day she suddenly said that she wanted to go to cram school.

She insisted that she wanted cram school, and not a tutor. The reason she gave was a fishy one.

But that enthusiasm was real, so I just helped convince our parents a little, and she thanked me with a broad smile.

When I questioned her a little because I felt like teasing her, as expected, her eyes began to swim.

So she really did have some other motive. Well, that's fine though.

When I told her that her eyes were giving her away, she stiffened enough that anybody could tell.

My sister's reactions are really too interesting.

Because she looked foolish with her mouth hanging open like a haniwa statue, I couldn't help but laugh.

The next time she turns into a haniwa statue, maybe I'll try throwing candy into her mouth.

I was telling the truth about her looking upwards to the right, but there's actually another habit that she doesn't even notice herself.

When my sister tries to bluff through something with a smile, her dimples twitch.

It's something I've noticed because we've been spending more time together recently.

I'm pretty sure she has no idea herself.

But I'm not going to tell her.

It's more interesting this way.

On our summer trips so far, under my mother's influence, my sister would avoid the beach because she didn't want a tan. This year, that same girl ran to get there first.

Perhaps she wanted to show off the results of swimming school, because she enthusiastically started swimming, but immediately drowned.

It was such a perfect example of drowning that it's a mystery why she was so confident.

What the heck are you doing, little sister.

I became worried about her after that so I was always keeping an eye on her. At some point she discovered the technique of climbing onto my back to make things easier.

Because she conceitedly told me to go here and there while clinging to my back, I occasionally sank into a wave on purpose.

She looked like an idiot being drenched by the waves, and was quite funny.

When I apologised for not noticing, she told me that the wave was the bad one, not me.

It really is true, what they say about stupid kids being cuter...

Even though up until last year, she almost never went to the beach, this year she did nothing but, and got darker and darker.

I thought that mother was going to get angry later, so I told her to properly reapply her sunscreen, but she just said 'yep, yep' and went back into the sea.

As expected, she flew into a panic because of mother's shock at her black skin though. That's why I told her. Honestly, what an idiot.

I came back home one day, and found that my parents were out. When I headed to the piano room, I don't know why, but my sister was playing Der Flohwalzer, ridiculously happily.

She even added "Bun cha cha~" and weird lyrics like that, and cheerfully swayed her body to the music.

But later that evening when mother asked her what she was doing, she nonchalantly said "I practised my piano. The music set for my piano recital."

Liar! What you played was Der Flohwalzer!

When did that turn into the recital piece!

When my sister is by herself, I have no idea what she's doing, but it's incredibly suspicious.

On Valentine's Day, she was careful to check through the chocolates I brought home.

She demanded that I show her our grade photo, but definitely not.

She kept smirking at me. It was a little gross.

I also got what was allegedly a hand-made chocolate from her, but because I was preparing for my year-end exams, I was hesitant to eat it.

She insisted that it would be okay because she got one of the maids to help, so I found my determination and ate it but...

...it didn't have any taste.

What the heck is a tasteless chocolate.

My sister waited for my impressions with a completely confident smile. For now, I just decided to tell her that it was delicious, and thanked her.

I wonder if next years' is also going to be hand-made...

Next year I have my high school section entrance exams as well, so if possible I want to find some skilful way of avoiding it.

The clincher for her weird behaviour was this:

One night, I woke up and went to get a glass of water.

The door to my sister's room was a little open, and I could hear a weird voice from inside.

Wondering what was going on, I peeked through the gap and found that in the room with only the bedlight on, sitting on the ground between the bed and closet with her back to me, was my sister, laughing eerily.

...I thought it was a youkai or something.

Not realising I was there, my sister was muttering something as she laughed.

It was scary, so I just quietly shut the door and went back to my room.

I wonder if something weird has taken ahold of her.

I've decided to watch over her for now.

And make sure to absolutely never go near her bedroom at night.

CHAPTER 12

Escalator schools are Japanese (usually private) schools that have associated sections. For example, it might have everything from primary school to high school, meaning that unlike other high schools, there aren't any tests to get in, and it's easy to not get kicked out. In Japan, getting into good middle schools or high schools involves testing, and schools where you just go straight up are thus compared to an escalator.

I entered Year 3.

In the primary section of Suiran, we change classes in Years 3 and 5.

The praying I did every night during spring break seemed to work because I ended up in a different class to Emperor.

I won against the 1:4 odds.

Oniisama graduated from the middle school section and entered the high school section.

Now that he's a high schooler he seems more busy than ever, and he spends even less time at home now.

That's no fun.

Both Yurie-sama and Aira-sama graduated from the primary section and became middle schoolers.

For some reason they suddenly looked a lot more mature once I saw them in their middle section uniforms, and I ended up feeling the difference between primary schoolers and middle schoolers.

I wonder why. It's only been a month since summer break.

Is it the magic of uniforms?

Mm~mm, the middle section uniform sure is cute.

Because Emperor visits a different salon to Yurie-sama now, his mood has been pretty bad.

They say to leave sleeping dogs lie, so I decided just to watch.

With such a dark aura around him, basically only Enjou can talk to him without a problem.

As expected of Enjou. It would be absolutely impossible for me.

When I look at how beautiful Yurie-sama is becoming, I can understand Emperor's anxiety about their age difference though.

When you're an adult, 4 years difference isn't a big deal, but to children it's much too wide a gap.

There's no way a 1st year middle schooler could look at a Year 3 kid romantically, right?

Maybe it's because Emperor understands that quite well. Whenever there's a guy who tries to approach Yurie-sama, Emperor just silently threatens him with eyes filled with bloodlust.

From Yurie-sama's point of view, she probably doesn't feel anything except a cute little brother's jealousy, which is yet another tragedy for him.

Sometimes he goes to the middle school section to wait for her, apparently. What a loyal one you are, Emperor.

Also, the cram school that I've been attending since Year 1 had a few Suiran students enter.

Suiran is an escalator school, so as long as you aren't exceptionally bad, you'll go straight up into the next section. Thanks to that, there isn't really any sense of crisis pushing the students to study.

What's more, almost everybody hires a private tutor instead of cram school.

And despite all this, a number of Suiran boys started going to *mine*.

It felt like the thing I'd been dreading all along had finally come around.

“So you were going to this cram school too, Kisshouin-san.”

A boy from my Year 3 class called out to me.

“Yes, well...”

“Um, would it be okay if I sat next to you?”

“...Please help yourself.”

I get it. That feeling when you’re heading somewhere new for the first time, and while you’re anxious about not knowing anybody, you suddenly spot an acquaintance. You unconsciously want to stay near them.

It’s reassuring, right? It’s relieving, right?

But to me, it’s a terrible development.

“Some other guys are going to start going as well, but they’re going on different days to me. I thought I was going to be alone, but to think that I’d find you here, Kisshouin-san. Ah, are you starting this year too?”

“No, I have been attending since Year 1.”

“Ehhh!? Really!? That’s surprising. I didn’t know you were such a studious typ-... ah, no, umm,”

Mn. I don’t mind, so don’t worry.

As the de facto leader of the ojousamas at Suiran, I probably don’t look anything like the studious type who’d join a cram school in Year 1, right?

“I wished to attend because of Oniisama’s influence.”

Well, I suppose I’ll just give him a safe answer here.

At some point I already had the label of brocon stuck to me after all.

“Wow, I see. By the way, how *is* this place? Is the work harder than the stuff at school?”

“Hmm. This cram school is focused on preparations for entrance exams, so I suppose it is quite difficult after all.”

“I seee.”

After that he asked me various other things as well, but naturally he was somebody who already knew me, so it got harder and harder to ask.

‘What’s your name?’ that is.

This sure is troubling.

Even though he’s being so friendly, if I told him that I didn’t know his name, he’d feel hurt, right?

Isn’t there some kind of hint...? Ah-, I know.

“Class is about to begin, so it would be best if you took out your exercise book. Have you taken a look at the contents of the textbook?”

“Ah, you’re right.”

After rummaging through his bag, he took out his Japanese study books and placed them on the table.

Let’s see, let’s see. The name written on the exercise book is—

“秋澤匠(Aki-Sawa Takumi)”-kun.

Alright, got it.

I’m not sure if his surname is read Akizawa or Akisawa though.

“What class did you end up in during the class changes, Akisawa-kun?”

I casually emphasised that I already knew his name.

“Ah-, Kisshouin-san, you knew my name? I was sure that your group had no idea who I was. Um, I’m in Class 4. Also, my surname is read as Akizawa, not Akisawa.”

...If you were thinking that I didn’t know your name, then introduce yourself first, dammit.

Here I was, worrying over whether a classmate would have his feelings hurt because I didn’t know his name.

Is this boy actually a bit of an airhead?

Class began before long, and brought an end to our conversation.

The contents were a little difficult for a Year 3 class, but for now I’m still fine.

Sitting next to me, Akisawa-kun, now known as Akizawa-kun, looked nervous, but he was trying his best to listen to the classwork and answer the questions in the exercise book.

After that came break time.

“Aah, I was so nervous! It’s a lot further ahead than our classes at school, isn’t it.”

Akizawa-kun stretched as he spoke to me like it was natural.

...Of course, right~?

This was what I was afraid of.

If a Suiran student entered my cram school, then naturally they would notice me. And then after that, they would pay attention to me.

Either that, or like Akizawa-kun, they could come over to talk to me.

I didn't expect that there would be someone so friendly from our first conversation though.

But like this, it gets in the way of my original purpose of going to the convenience store!

Aahhh~ I knew this would happen...

"I think so too. In exchange, the classes at school become easy though."

"I seee. Your grades have been good, haven't they, Kisshouin-san. You didn't seem the type at all, you know."

This boy really is an air-head. His tongue slipped.

"Do I appear that lax a person?"

I decided to give him a jab.

"That's not what I meant! Umm, how do I say this, it felt like you lived in a different world to hardcore students, I guess? The girls around you are like that too. And also, you're a member of that Pivoine, after all."

Well, that's true.

Even amongst my peers, my family is quite powerful, so in a school that emphasises

tradition, being descended from a noble family really gives you influence. Because of that, those kind of girls gather around me, and I naturally end up with the most intimidating group amongst all the girls.

Everyone feels more like followers rather than friends, so it's a little sad though. Rather than "Reika-sama", it would be great if they called me "Reika-chan", huh~ I wonder if I actually have any friends in that school...

"I'm pretty surprised! Kisshouin-san, you're hard to approach and I thought you wouldn't give me the time of day, but to think that you'd be this easy to talk to."

Akizawa-kun laughed happily.

Mn, so I really am hard to approach after all.

"Do you think it would be okay if I sat next to you next week as well?"

I suppose I won't be able to go to the convenience store either way now, right? What's more, there aren't that many people I can talk to so closely.

"Yes, of course."

I wonder if Akizawa-kun will become my friend.

CHAPTER 13

I think everybody knows already, but Japanese schools go

Primary: Years 1~6

Middle: First to Third Years

High: First to Third Years

Uni: First to Fourth Years (Generally)

“Uu huu~”

Opening the box in front of me, I smirked.

It was the middle of the night, and I was alone in my room.

There’s a box I keep in the depths of my closet, and occasionally I take it out to examine the contents.

“I’ve saved up quite a bit, haven’t I.”

Inside the box were rolls of banknotes.

I’m currently saving up money at home.

In the Kisshouin family, the pocket money I get is an unthinkable amount going by my common sense.

Each month (although it’s not like there’s some set amount), I usually get x0,000 Yen from my parents.

It’s not money that you’d be giving to a primary schooler as pocket money, right?

If you give somebody this much money from their childhood, I don’t think they’ll grow

into a decent adult.

It seems like it's in case I ever need money while hanging out with friends, but to begin with I go to lessons after school and basically never go out to play, so there's nowhere for me to use it.

My family buys me what I need for school after all, and when I need something from outside, our chauffeur-cum-helper goes out to buy it.

Thanks to that, I've done nothing but save it.

I'm keeping this money in case our house falls into ruin by some chance. I want it to help pay my tuition.

But well, even I have something I want to buy in secret (mostly cheap sweets), so I've decided on my own my monthly spending money. It's 500 Yen.

I think this is about right for a primary schooler's pocket money.

And the rest of the money, I place in this locked, and slightly largish jewellery box.

It would be too weird for a little girl to want a safe, so while I was looking for something else with a lock, I came across this in a jewellery shop.

It's small enough that a child can carry it in their two hands, and it's perfect for putting notes into.

Okaasama had come with me, and I immediately pestered her for it.

I'm sure everybody around me thought I was a little girl drawn to it because of how sparkly and pretty it was, but I chose it entirely for practical purposes.

It was a miscalculation that she bought me a pink sapphire necklace to go along with it though.

That night, I tore out the soft velvet dividers without hesitation, and turned it into a normal rectangular box.

And then, I took out all the notes I'd been hiding in dictionaries until now, and moved

them into the jewellery-box-turned-safebox.

Just as expected, there was plenty of room left afterwards, and it looked like it would do just fine as a safe.

I sure found something good.

To make sure I absolutely don't lose the key, I keep it taped far inside my drawers.

And now, sometimes at night I'll take open it up and chuckle, like an evil governor looking at his urn of gold coins.

"One note, two notes..."

U hu hu hu hu... I can't stop the laughter.

Although it's still a bit vague, each time we go up a year, the caste divisions become clearer and clearer.

The ones at the top are, naturally, the members of the Pivoine. There are only about 10 of them in each grade, so this never changes.

As for the rest, the very fact that they entered Suiran during the primary section means that they're all members of the upper class to a degree, so the division into middle and bottom castes is more about the person themselves rather than how powerful their families are.

The upper-middle caste are the followers of the upper caste, and behave conspicuously.

The lower caste kids are all meek children who pass the time quietly.

And as for me, I'm the top member of the top faction amongst the girls.

Thanks to that I don't get bullied or anything, but it's saddening that the quiet kids are afraid of me. If I had to say it, I'd prefer to spend my time leisurely talking to the

meeker kids.

Despite being children, the girls in my group are quite haughty already.

They're all girls that would never ever buy cheap sweets from a convenience store.

We have a few members of the Petite Pivoine too, so the group values tradition and social status. The followers are more proud of it than the actual Pivoine members are, so it's pretty tiring.

When I consider that one day they might catch me without my fake Ojousama mask, it sends chills down my spine.

I can't hurt the honour of the Kisshouin family, so I smile along with my surroundings. Even though I'm only a primary schooler, interpersonal relations are already pretty tough.

While I was walking with those girls in tow as usual, I found Akizawa-kun coming down from the opposite side of the hallway.

Noticing me, he smiled and was about to wave, but perhaps he was overpowered by the girls around me, because he averted his eyes and walked past me looking a little frightened.

...Uu, I knew it.

A group of girls is scary, isn't it. But my group is particularly so.

I'm really sorry, Akizawa-kun.

Recently we've always been getting along next to each other at cram school, so I finally thought 'Male Friend GET!' but if he got scared of me and avoided me at cram school because of this, it would be really sad.

Today when I go to cram school, I'll apologise.

imouto

"Nah, don't worry about it. I ignored you too, so aren't we even?"

When I got to cram school, I immediately said "Sorry about making it hard to talk to

me. I'm sorry about ignoring you." but Akizawa-kun forgave me with a smile. What a good boy.

"It requires courage to call out to somebody amongst a crowd of girls, doesn't it."

"Yeah. And especially for your group, Kisshouin-san."

Thought so.

Akizawa-kun belongs to a group in the middle caste in our grade. He doesn't follow around somebody in the upper caste, but isn't meek like a lower caste either. Truly smack bang in the middle.

As for me, I think being in that kind of the position seems the most fun and free, so I'm envious of him.

"Do your friends know that I got to the same cram school as you?"

"No. To begin with, I have not spoken about the fact that I attend one."

"Ah, I see. Would it be better not to say? I've already told a few of my friends though."

"I am not particularly concealing anything, but... Well, I suppose it might be better not to speak of it."

I lied. I'm totally hiding it.

I mean, if I told somebody, what if they wanted to come as well?

In that case, my original goal of going to the convenience store would be out of reach.

"Hmm~ Then maybe it would be better not to talk to you at school, Kisshouin-san. I wouldn't be able to explain why I knew you after all."

“I don’t think it is necessary to go that far.”

It would be like shunning him, and I’d feel bad.

And also, because he’s already here in cram school I’ve already given up on the convenience store, so it isn’t that much of a problem even if they find out I’m going now.

“Mn, but well, I think it’s better like this. You’re kind of different at school after all.”

“Oh? I am?”

“Yeah. To begin with I was the one who spoke to you first. I didn’t think you’d be this easy to talk to. Like, I thought your attitude would be a bit more like, *‘Hmph. I don’t want to be spoken to by the likes of you.’*”

“Ehhhh!?”

“Ahaha.”

Is that the kind of image I had?

No, I mean, I *did* have a faint idea, but... it really is a shock.

“Do I appear that unpleasant a person?”

“Eh-? Sorry, did I hurt you? I didn’t mean it in a bad way. It’s just like, the Pivoine members are sort of in a different world to me, I guess. Your friends call you Reika-sama after all.”

“Ahh...”

Using ‘-sama’ is just like ‘gokigen’yoh’, and is something left behind in Suiran as a remnant of the past.

It’s particularly easy to be called ‘-sama’ if you’re a Pivoine member.

“Ah-, would it be better if I called you Reika-sama as well?

“Absolutely not.”

‘Well you never know without asking,’ he said with a laugh.

CHAPTER 14

Uh, in Japanese you don't need to say 'I', 'I', for every little thing. They only occasionally use it. For that reason, even when mothers refer to themselves as Okaachan or sisters refer to themselves as Oneechan or this little girl here refers to herself as Riri, it's nowhere near as annoying as in English.

How it sounds in JA: Riri went to the shops today. (I) saw a great big bear, and (I) thought to (my)self, wouldn't this be perfect in Riri's room?

How it sounds in EN: Riri went to the shops today. Riri saw a great big bear, and Riri thought to herself, wouldn't this be perfect in Riri's room?

Summer break is a gathering of troublesome relatives.

Naturally they bring children, or rather, sometimes I think children is all they have, but amongst the children is my natural enemy.

"Taka-niisama~ I've missed you!"

Hugging *my* Oniisama was the daughter of my father's younger sister, and a girl 1 year my junior, Kotou Ririna.

In other words, my cousin.

"Riri's wanted to meet you allll this time, but Taka-niisama, why didn't you ever come visit me?"

"I was busy with school, you see."

"Ehhh~ But Riri wanted to meet you! In exchange, stay with Riri for all of today! Okay?"

...

“Yeah. With Reika too, okay?”

Ririna finally looked this way after 100% ignoring me all this time.

“Ahh, Reika-san. So you were here.”

“Gokigen’yoh, Ririna-san.”

Of course I was. Right next to Oniisama!

Didn’t you purposefully push me away when you ran to hug Oniisama?

Damnitt~ This girl isn’t cute at all!

Ririna’s an only child, and she apparently wants an Oniisama, so she’s always been clingy with *my* Oniisama.

Incidentally, she apparently doesn’t need an Oneesama (me).

Hmph!

“Hey, Taka-niisamaa. Let’s have a chat over there. Riri has plenty of things she wants to tell you.”

With that, she pulled *my* Oniisama away.

With Oniisama taken away, I was suddenly by myself.

Endure it, endure it. I’m an adult. I’m an adult.

It’s childish getting angry over a little girl’s selfishness.

It’s only for today after all, so it doesn’t matter. I’ll lend him to you.

My Oniisama!

“Reika, you come too.”

Oniisama turned his head to call for me.

Waa~hh, Oniisamaa!

The enemy skilfully chose a two-seater sofa and secured the position next to Oniisama. The topic of conversation is nothing but Ririna’s bragging.

About where she went, the various things she bought, how she was praised at a recital...

And the kind Oniisama listened to her with a smile.

“Honestly, Riri wished she went to the same school as you, Oniisama. Then we could have been together.”

One of the requirements for the Suiran primary section is living somewhere less than an hour commute away, so Ririna couldn’t get in.

Honestly, I’m relieved about that. I’d absolutely hate to go to the same school as her.

After that, Ririna’s boasting continued.

While completely ignoring my existence.

When I first met Ririna, I was thinking of getting along with my younger cousin.

But the moment she saw me, she registered me as an obstacle and enemy, so I gave up on getting along before long.

Aahh, I got completely ignored and refused.

At the very least I don’t respond when she picks a fight, but I can’t stop the sparks silently flying between our eyes.

With his gentle and refreshing looks, and his gentle personality as well, naturally Oniisama is popular amongst the other children amongst our relatives as well.

Children steadily started gathering around him, and Ririna's mood took a nosedive. She started glaring in every direction.

Amongst them were distant relatives in middle and high school, who were Ririna's biggest rivals.

There were those who genuinely dreamt of Oniisama, but some of them might have also been spurred on by their parents, because they looked like they were aiming to become the wife of the Kisshouin heir.

"Takateru-sama, it has been a while. Do you remember me?"

"Of course I do, Kasumi-san."

"I've looked forward to meeting you as well, Takateru-sama."

"I see. Thank you very much, Maya-sama. It seems you're doing well."

"Hey! I was talking to Taka-niisama! Don't butt in!"

Ririna clung to Oniisama's arm and barked at them.

"I see you're the same as always, Ririna-san. Don't trouble Takateru-sama so much."

"Huh! There's no way that Riri is troubling Taka-niisama! Taka-niisama loves Riri! Don't say whatever you want! Go away already!"

Ririna became really irritated.

In the end they could have just ignored it as the nonsense of a child, but everybody

was more or less troubled by her normally selfish behaviour and many found it irritating. Given how often Ririna tries to monopolise the precious Oniisama, she often butts heads with the older girls who don't back down.

"Takateru-sama, there is some summer homework that I don't understand. Could you please teach me?"

"Hahh? Go ask your tutor or cram school!"

"Nobody was speaking to you. Takateru-sama, is it no good?"

"Mm~mm, well, just a little is fine. I guess we'll do it together with anybody else who has problems."

"Taka-niisama!"

"You didn't bring any homework, Ririna-san? Then perhaps you should go read a picture book somewhere."

"What was that!? I'm not at the age where I read picture books anymore!"

The smaller kids were frightened by their fighting, so I'll call them over and play with some toys prepared in advance.

Fights between women are scary so I immediately retreated from the frontlines. Oniisama, try your best.

Now then, should we go with something easy like playing cards?

"Calm down, Ririna. You can stay by my side, but only if you behave, okay?"

"But Taka-niisama! You're Riri's Taka-niisama! Why do we have to be with these

people!?”

Apparently Ririna couldn't endure the fact that she couldn't monopolise him.

“Riri's Taka-niisama, you say? Takateru-sama has a proper young sister in Reika-sama. Takateru-sama is Reika-sama's Oniisama.”

Ah-, the taboo words.

After hearing the number one thing she didn't want to be told, Ririna trembled in mortification then for some reason sharply glared my way.

Whoa, whoa, it's not like I said it, right?

“I definitely won't forgive you lot! I'll tell Okaasama on you!”

After screaming that, Ririna flew out of the room with a bright red face and teary eyes.

“I'll talk to Ririna, so everybody, please study first.”

Saying that, Oniisama chased after Ririna, and everyone left behind started to complain at once.

“What's with that girl. Even selfishness should have its limits.”

“She's being spoilt because Takateru-sama is kind.”

“Whenever there's something she doesn't like, she immediately thinks she can just go tell her parents!”

It was an explosion of displeasure at Ririna stealing away their long awaited chance to get close to Oniisama.

“With that girl treating Reika-sama as an enemy, even Reika-sama must be angry, right?”

“Right, right. Just now she was clearly ignoring Reika-sama, wasn’t she.”

Oop, the conversation turned my way.

“Well, by no means does she visit each and every day, so I personally do not mind. Ririna-san must be lonely from being an only child.”

I’ll give a safe reply just in case.

If I joined in on their badmouthing here, things’ll probably get annoying later.

Although the girls seemed dissatisfied that I didn’t join in, even without me, they began a huge Ririna Badmouthing Festival.

Scary.

Ririna really is younger after all, so honestly I should be trying to persuade them to stop, but no matter how much I think I can’t come up with any good points about her, so I’ll just pretend I didn’t hear anything.

This is exactly why family gatherings are so tiring.

CHAPTER 15

Autumn was busy as usual with the Athletics Meet and the Learning Presentation, you see. Emperor who was the anchor for the baton relay, managed the shocking achievement of pulling the class from last place to 1st place, so it's been really noisy with the squealing of the girls.

"It was a shame about your class wasn't it, Akizawa-kun."

Akizawa-kun's class had been 1st place until Emperor overtook them. What's more, Akizawa-kun was the anchor.

"We were up against Kaburagi-kun so it can't be helped. Maybe it might have been different if Enjou-kun had joined in though."

The truth is, Akizawa-kun and Enjou are actually in the same class.

This time Enjou injured his leg before the Athletics Meet or something, so he couldn't participate in the baton relay or any of the other main events.

"But you *were* the anchor, so you are fast too, aren't you. As I recall, you participated last year as well, did you not?"

"I only got chosen as the anchor right as it started though, thanks to Enjou-kun's injury. But running isn't a bad feeling. When we enter the middle school section, I want to join the track and field club."

"Oh, I see."

I haven't thought as far as middle school yet.

To begin with, I guess there isn't anything I want to particularly do. Maybe if I had to say *something*, then eating a lot of cheap sweets?

Uu-... I'm talking about myself here, but it's pretty bad...

"You were part of the ball-toss game, right, Kisshouin-san?"

"Yes. I was first place."

Since ball-tossing was something he could do even with a busted leg, Enjou joined in. Though, with him there, the girls in his class were more interested in getting close to him than the ball-tossing, and a whole different kind of competition began. Because of that, Akizawa-kun's class did really badly.

Giving all that a small glance, I diligently continued to toss the balls into the nets, and turned into a ball-tossing machine.

Since I'm not all that great with sports I wouldn't have been able to help in the other events, so I had just wanted to try my best in ball-tossing at least.

I'm more than satisfied with 1st place in ball-toss.

"For a while after the Athletics Meet, all these girls kept barging into Kaburagi-kun's class to see him, didn't they? The uproar was really intense, huh? Apparently Kaburagi-kun got angry in the end though."

"Indeed."

But that uproar is an annual occurrence.

Girls are always in an uproar around Kaburagi Masaya, but after events like athletics meets, the magnitude is on a different level.

And he flips out each year as well, so I kind of think they should just learn their lesson already, but apparently a maiden in love can't be stopped.

“The uproar on each Valentine’s Day is also a sight to see, isn’t it.”

“Yeah, that was pretty crazy too! There was even a line of girls in the corridor waiting to give him chocolates, and it ended up as this mountain on his table, you know? Wow, it was crazy~ Someone like me only gets chocolate from Mum, Oneechan and my childhood friend.”

“I understand. I too, only gave chocolates to Otousama and Oniisama.”

Starting two years ago, I started giving handmade chocolates to Otousama and Oniisama.

This year Oniisama tried to be polite about it and told me “It must have been difficult for you to make it yourself, so just buying me chocolate is fine, okay?” but how could there possibly be *too* much time or effort for my beloved Oniisama!

And what’s more, this year has the all-important exams for the high school section, so I stuffed my prayers for his success into the chocolate as well, along with my love for him.

And Oniisama seemed to find it delicious too, so I’m super pleased.

Since he seemed so happy about it, I’ll definitely try my best next year as well.

“Oh? You didn’t give Kaburagi-kun any chocolate, Kisshouin-san?”

“Eh-? Why would I?”

What the heck? What a disturbing idea.

“No, I mean, I thought for sure that you were in love with him too.”

“Definitely not.”

I accidentally gave a blunt denial.

This isn't a joke. Just who the heck would pursue such a dangerous romance.

"I see. Ah-, could it be that it's Enjou-kun?"

"That is also not the case."

Um, seriously though. Why are those two the only choices?

To begin with, I don't like popular people.

Looking at them objectively they're certainly cool, but if they're so popular there's gunna be too many rivals, and it's just scary.

Mm~mm... But 'romance', huh...?

Thinking about it, I've never had a crush on anybody in this world. Maybe it's still too early for me.

In my old life, my first love was my older cousin, wasn't it.

Geh-! Aren't I just like Ririna then?

But I don't think I was such a troublesome child...

If I remember correctly, we went kite-flying on new years and he played with me, so I liked him because he was kind to me.

The fact that he wasn't rowdy like the boys in my grade gave him a lot of points.

In my old life, when I was in primary school the boys in my grade would do stuff like play hockey with the broom sticks and accidentally hit girls with the ball, or have milk-chugging competitions (which I still don't understand), or steal the sweets that I brought with me on excursions and even tell me "It's cause you keep eating stuff like

this that you're a fatty, you knooow!" as they walked off with them, so they really were just a bunch of idiots.

What do you mean 'fatty', you stupid brats! My size at the time wasn't 'fat' yet, it was 'plump'!

I was just a bit round.

When it snowed, I packed some snow into a rock of a snowball and pegged it at those fools. And then immediately hid. They were super mad because they didn't know who did it. Serves them right.

Thanks to that, although there aren't any big idiots like that in Suiran, thanks to the shining presences of Kaburagi and Enjou in our grade, unfortunately the impressions left by the other boys in our grade are weak.

Although I think once we get a bit older and their own individuality starts to bloom, there'll be a few other popular guys in their own right.

Endure until then, unfortunate boys.

But still, kind boys, huh?

When it comes to boys who are kind, I know basically Oniisama and...

I stared at Akizawa-kun next to me.

"Eh-? What?"

Akizawa-kun is a nice kid too, isn't he.

At cram school he'll talk to me without reserve, and I get the feeling that I'm more myself around him than when I'm with any of the girls at school.

And the other day when I was going home, he opened the door for me. He's a gentleman.

His face and brown hair remind me of a squirrel, so he's cute.

“Um, Kisshouin-san? Did I do something?”

“No, nothing of the sort.”

I smiled to blow things over.

Akizawa-kun is a kind and very good kid, but for some reason I can only think of him as a ‘good friend’.

‘Friendzone’. I think I can kind of see his future—

Having no idea of the stupid things I was thinking about, Akizawa-kun took out the learning materials with a smile.

...Sorry, Akizawa-kun.

CHAPTER 16

I became a 4th year, and it was around the time that the weather was starting to grow warm that it happened.

A boy from another school confessed to Yurie-sama.

The news arrived just as school ended, and Kaburagi Masaya was in the Petite Pivoine salon. I had been killing time in the salon to wait for my lessons to begin, so I was present to witness the moment that a human transformed into the devil.

Enjou chased after Kaburagi who had made a mad dash out of the salon, leaving the rest of us who were left behind, wondering if it was okay to talk about it. After some silently exchanged glances, it seemed that we all decided just to wait it out and see.

The result was that the student from the other school was instantly taken down by the sprinting Emperor. The Emperor had Yurie-sama board his car, and the two of them rode off, leaving the boy behind on the floor.

Ever since that day, in order to exterminate every boy who approached Yurie-sama, Emperor would always go to and from school with her in the Kaburagi's car. Even when he wasn't with her he had middle school students affiliated with the Kaburagi family standing watch in class, and even during Yurie-sama's lessons, he would try to spend as long as possible with her.

His Majesty the Emperor, the idol of all the girls, had become a splendid stalker in the making.

If it continued like that, naturally even Yurie-sama would feel suffocated by it. Even if it was just the clinginess of a cute little brother, she still had a limit to her patience. And naturally, Yurie-sama eventually got angry at him, and partially to have him

reflect, she declared that he was forbidden from approaching her.

Well, yeah. I mean, now that she's in her second year of middle school, naturally she'd want to hang out with her friends after school once in a while, and there'd be times when she'd want to be by herself too.

Think about it; keeping watch 24-hours a day, sticking to you like glue, and on top of all that, growling like a mad dog the moment a guy approaches you.

Far from blaming her, I take my hat off to Yurie-sama for putting up with it for as long as she did.

And now, with Yurie-sama angry at him and having forbidden him to approach her, Emperor is down in the dumps.

He's just like a wilted plant.

He's not a ridiculously arrogant person or anything, but he normally has this confidence, and this regal aura like the world belongs to him. And today it was nowhere to be seen.

With dead fish eyes and a hunched over back, what he wore was the aura of a loser. Apparently even Enjou didn't have a way to revive this shell of a person, and he was just watching over from the side, helplessly.

Perhaps they didn't want to get wrapped up in his bad mood, because for a while now, the salon has had less people than before.

Certainly, it's what a wise person would do.

But as the careless person that I am, I thoughtlessly opened the door to the salon today, looking for sweets.

Even thoughtlessness should have its limits...

I had comrades in my thoughtlessness, so we quietly had tea together.

Today's tea is a black tea that the British royal family uses.

The ginger cookies of the same brand are sweet. Aah, so yummy.

But lately, maybe because I quit swimming school, but I get the feeling that I'm getting a little round...

I've heard that your fat cells multiply during puberty.

And apparently those fat cells don't disappear all your life. How horrific.

I'd better be careful...

I think I'll have just *one* more of these yummy ginger cookies.

"I'm done for..."

I think I just heard something that I wasn't meant to.

"Yurie won't even pick up the phone..."

Even after all that's happened, he's still been persistently calling her?

Even though that'd just get her *more* mad...

"Yurieee..."

With his head in his hands like that, he's the very picture of a useless husband whose wife has run away from him.

I can't watch this any longer.

I know what Yurie-sama is actually thinking.

The truth is at the English school that I've been attending since April, Aira-sama shares the same classroom as me.

When my lesson finishes, Aira-sama's begins, so we have chances to meet.

And the other day, Aira-sama told me about her best friend, Yurie-sama.

According to Aira-sama, Yurie-sama didn't think Emperor's excessiveness was good for his future, so she was keeping him away in hopes that he would reflect on his selfishness and grow.

Apparently just "raking him over the coals a little".

I think those coals are just a little too hot though.

Emperor doesn't think of Yurie-sama as an older sister. Even though it's obvious to everyone that he's the very picture of a boy in love, has Yurie-sama really not noticed? Wondering that, I asked Aira-sama, but apparently Aira-sama didn't know either.

"She probably has noticed Masaya's feelings, but maybe she's reluctant to acknowledge them because it would ruin their relationship~ Yurie herself can only see Masaya as a little brother after all."

From an Oneesama in her second year of middle school, it probably would be pretty hard to do something as cruel as rejecting a little 4th grader and forcing him to see reality.

You sure have it tough, huh, Emperor.

Ah, speaking of which, in the manga he also had his heart broken by Yurie-sama, and ended up tattered as well, didn't he.

I had no idea that he was this bad from this age though.

While I was spacing out and thinking about that, perhaps his beastly instincts noticed, because Emperor suddenly glared my way.

Geh-, this is bad.

"Oi. You there."

"Y-, Yes?!"

Awawah, this is bad.

I stepped on the tail of a wounded tiger!

“If there’s something you wanna say, then say it.”

“S-, Something I wish to say?”

Something I want to say, something I want to say... What the heck do I want to say?

Aah, the fear is sending me into a panic.

“U-, Umm, apparently Yurie-sama wants to rake you over the coals a little!”

“HAHH...?”

UU HYOH HH! MY TONGUE SLIPPEDDD!!

“Why do you know something like that?”

“I, I HEARD FROM AIRA-SAMAAA!”

AIRA-SAMA, I’M SORRY!

“Aira? You’re close with Aira?”

“We go to the same English tutor!”

“English tutor... I see.”

Emperor started to mutter to himself as he thought about something, but then he suddenly looked up and stared right at me.

And his eyes were filled with power, like the cicada-shell-man from earlier was a lie.

“Alright. You. From now on you’re my spy on Aira.”

EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!?

CHAPTER 17

I, Kisshouin Reika, have been appointed by His Majesty the Emperor, the role of ‘spy’, or in other words, gopher.

After that, the Emperor drove everybody else out from the salon, leaving me, Emperor and Enjou, at which point the strategy meeting began.

“First of all, what did you hear from Aira?”

Uuu, his glare is so scary...

I wanna run away.

“L-, Like I said, that Yurie-sama wishes to rake you over the coals...”

“Why did you hear something like that from Aira?”

“When we met by chance at the English tutoring school, Aira-sama a-, asked about you, K-, Kaburagi-sa, ma, and I replied that you did not seem well, at which point she informed me of Yurie-sama’s feelings.”

Scary, so scary. Please don’t glare at me~

Also I ended up using his name for the first time to his face.

Because I was so nervous, I bit my tongue.

Please, somebody just save me already~

“The hell do you think you’re doing, casually spreading rumours about others?”

Quite right, Your Majesty.

Anybody would be unhappy if people talked about them behind their back.

I... might be done for, even before I meet the protagonist...

“Now, now. Don’t intimidate her so much. You’re scaring her.”

‘Right?’, asked Enjou with a smile.

Can I trust that smile?

“Shaddup, Shuusuke.”

“To begin with, right now pretty much the whole school is talking about you, right?

Right, Kisshouin-san?”

Please don’t look to me.

Because even if I agreed with you, there’s no way I’d be able to say it.

Even if it’s the truth.

“Shuusuke, you bastard...”

“Masaya, you want information on Yurie too, right? Then instead of threatening her, request it of her properly. Well, if it’s Aira, then *I* could ask for you though.”

Yes, yes please, please do.

And even a second earlier, please liberate me from this place.

“No. Aira definitely wouldn’t tell you. I’ll use this woman instead.”

“Aah, that might be right. Then, Kisshouin-san, can we ask this of you? Specifically, we want to know how angry Yurie-sama is, for example, or when she plans on forgiving

him perhaps. Masaya, is there anything else?”

“...Whether or not Yurie even plans on forgiving me.”

“Hm~mm, well Yurie herself said that she just wanted to rake you over the coals, so I don’t think she’s cutting you off. If you convey to her that you’ve really been reflecting, she might forgive you.”

“I SEE!”

He suddenly got livelier.

This guy... isn’t he surprisingly simple?

GYAH-, I’m sorry for being cheeky! I’m sorry!

Don’t glare at mee~

I’m starting to think Emperor really *can* read minds.

“Alright! You there. When’s your next English class?”

“I have one the day after tomorrow.”

“The heck. Isn’t that still ages? Better that you go there right now and ask Aira for me.”

Don’t ask for the impossible.

“If Yurie finds out that you’ve been overbearing again, she’ll get even angrier, you know? In this case, you should quietly wait out these two days.”

“!! I see. It’d be bad if she got any angier.”

As soon as Yurie-sama’s name appears, Emperor listens obediently.

He really *is* simple.

“And that’s how it is. We’ll be relying on you, Kisshouin-san.

~smiile~

It doesn’t matter what I have to say? Is that how it is?

“You there! What was your name again?”

“It is Kisshouin Reika...”

You’re asking after all this time? Not that I mind.

“Alright! Kisshouin! Become a splendid spy, and fulfil your duties!”

“Hah...”

What ‘spy’. I’m just a gopher, aren’t I.

Completely energised again, perhaps he was hungry now, because Emperor went to get sweets.

“He’s not a ridiculously arrogant person or anything.” Who was it that said this? It was me.

You really have no eye for people, me~

If this isn’t ‘ridiculously arrogant’, then just what on earth is?

Why is it that even though we’ve pretty much never spoken before, and even though he doesn’t even know my name, he uses me this much like it’s natural?

Should I just tell Aira-sama, and have her snitch to Yurie-sama?

‘He’s been threatening a helpless girl into being his gopher,’ she could say.

...Nonono, don’t do anything desperate now.

If you do that, you’ll be killed, one hundred percent. Yes. Absolutely.

“Try your best, okay? Kisshouin-san. If you succeed, your adored Masaya will be grateful.”

“I don’t particularly adore him or anything...”

Because of the ridiculous treatment, I accidentally muttered a bit as my real self.

Any adoration I had for Emperor was cleanly left behind in my old life.

Yeah, I adored a 2d character and I was a bit of an embarrassing girl. Problem?

Right now ‘Emperor’ is synonymous with ‘destruction’ for me, so I haven’t an atom of adoration for him.

“Oh? Really? I mean, I notice you looking at him a lot. That’s why I thought that you liked him too. I mean, look, all your friends loiter around us too.”

What a way of putting things. And what’s more, he noticed my secret observation.

“The two of you are quite conspicuous, and so I could not help but look your way. If I have troubled you by doing so, I apologise. I shall pay more attention henceforth.”

For now, what I need to do first is pull myself together.

Now that I’m not under Emperor’s glare, the ~~lion~~ big cat in my heart has returned. As if I would lose to Enjou on his own.

“Well then, if this is all that you have to say, I shall take my leave. Gokigen’yoh.”

I want to leave this demon’s lair as quickly as possible.

I want to sprint full speed out of this place with my tail between my legs.

“Yeah, goodbye. Take care, okay?”

Enjou gave me a gentle wave.

As I was leaving, Emperor spotted me as he nibbled on a biscuit and said,

“YEAH! Gopher, make sure to do your job!”

So he even called me a gopher in the end...

Wasn't I supposed to be a spy! Jeez.

The mouth is the mother of all calamities.

Honestly, I think I'm about to cry. About all sorts of things.

It's said that in all times and places, spies that failed their mission were disposed of by their organisations.

Will tomorrow bring me success or failure?

CHAPTER 18

In Japan, texting isn't done via sms phone numbers. It's done by email. Hence exchanging addresses is sort of like exchanging mobile numbers, except that you aren't given their call number, only their text 'number' so to say.

Akizawa-kun's innocent smile awaited me at cram school.

Compared to that black duo, Akizawa-kun's smile is like a polar opposite.

Aah, he's so soothing...

"What's wrong, Kisshouin-san? You seem kind of tired."

"Yes, well, various things happened, you see."

Right. Various things.

I was supposed to be living in a way that bothered Emperor as little as possible, but to think that I would be nominated as gopher.

What the heck are you doing, me?

"I see. Are you okay?"

No, I'm not okay at all.

But I can't get the untainted Akizawa-kun wrapped up in it.

"If I fail my mission, please pray for my well-being in the afterlife..."

"Huh?"

To begin with, even if I asked Aira-sama the questions that Emperor gave me, would she even answer?

Aira-sama treats me more closely than others, but would she go as far as to answer questions like *that*?

But if she won't answer, then what the heck will happen to me?

Will I be yelled at and called a useless gopher?

Well, if it's just that much, I don't really care.

Being the woman hated by Kaburagi Masaya would leave me in a precarious position at school though.

Or rather, I was designated as spy in front of all the kids who were in the salon at the time, so won't they all know that I'm a gopher now?

...The day that my in-school position falls might be sooner than expected.

Aahh, the bad possibilities keep on growing.

"Hey, Kisshouin-san. Wanna eat these?"

"Eh-"

Akizawa-kun took out individually-wrapped financiers.



"My mum gave me these in case I got hungry. Eating sweet things might improve your mood."

After saying those words, Akizawa-kun smiled at me.

A-, AKIZAWA-KUUUUUUUUUUUN!!

What a good kid. You're an angel!

It's like heaven and earth when compared to those two.

I'm so glad that I became your friend!

"Thanks, Akizawa-kun!"

After eating his financiers, I really did feel better.

I even thought that it might be okay to share my treasured kinakomochi flavoured Tirolian chocolates with him.



And so finally, the day of English school arrived.

Ever since that day, I've been avoiding the salon. But today, the moment that I stepped out of the classroom to leave school, I found Emperor standing in the hallway giving me a 'You get it, right...?' look with his eyes, so as the spy that I was, I replied 'Yes, of course!' with my eyes as well, and immediately headed to the shoe rack.

Honestly, now that it's come to this, I have no choice but to keep my head down and play the gopher.

After my English class finished, I waited anxiously for Aira-sama's arrival.

I already let my chauffeur know to come a little later, so things were fine in regards to

when I'd be leaving, but the problem was what time Aira-sama would be coming. If she came just as class started, then we wouldn't have any time to talk. As you'd expect, I wouldn't be able to just wait here until her classes finished. Please, Aira-sama. Come quickly.

Perhaps the heavens were on my side, because Aira-sama appeared almost right afterwards.

"Aira-sama!"

"My, it's Reika-san. Gokigen'yoh."

Aah, Aira-sama, thank goodnesss...

"Um, the truth is, there is in fact something I wish to ask you, Aira-sama!"

"Hm? Ask *me*?"

I didn't want anybody else to hear, so we ended up chatting on the landing of the staircase.

"The truth is, it is about Yurie-sama."

"Yurie?"

Aira-sama's expression turned puzzled.

"Y-, Yes. Um, just how angry at Kaburagi-sama is Yurie-sama? And when is it that she intends on forgiving him?"

There wasn't any time so I just cut right to the chase, but Aira-sama's expression turned more and more suspicious.

"And why would you want to know about Yurie and Masaya, Reika-san? Enough that you came out of your way to ask me."

Well yeah, that is pretty suspicious.

When I'm not close to Kaburagi at all, I went and stuck my nose in their business, so Aira-sama's reaction was natural.

I wonder if I seem like some nosy onlooker to her.

"I don't know why you're asking, but if you're prying into this on a whim, you'll make Masaya angry, you know?"

I've already made him angry.

And I'm doing this at Kaburagi Masaya's direction.

Should I just try telling her the truth?

But if I do, there's no way she would give information to Stalker Kaburagi's underling.

Mm~mm...

Seeing me fall silent as I agonised over it, Aira-sama narrowed her eyes.

"Could it be that Masaya said something to you?"

Goodness!

How did you know!

Could it be that Aira-sama can read minds just like Emperor!?

"Em, umm..."

But should I just come clean? Or should I struggle to keep up my act?

“Ah, mn. Got it. It’s probably just Masaya telling you to ask about Yurie, right?”

That’s exactly it!

You’re amazing, Aira-sama. How did you see through everything!?

“Looks like he hasn’t reflected at all. I wonder if he even understands why Yurie was angry. You can just ignore what Masaya has to say, or so I’d like to say, but you’re in a spot where you can’t do that, right?”

“Yes. Exactly right.”

I nodded up and down.

“Alright. I’ll ask Yurie for you. As for how angry she is, tell him that threatening unwilling people and working them hard for his own matters like this will just get her even angrier.”

“That is...”

...definitely not something a coward like me could say.

“Huhu, but my class is about to start, and I’ll only be able to ask Yurie after I come home, so... Naturally, next week’s English tutorial would be too late, right?”

“I cannot say for certain, but probably...”

Given that he couldn’t even wait until ‘the day after next’ I can’t imagine that he’d be able to wait until ‘next week’.

“Got it. Then, Reika-san, do you have a mobile?”

I don't have many chances to use it, but it has a GPS with it, so it's more like a crime deterrent.

That's why when I go to the convenience store during cram school, I naturally leave it in the classroom for alibi purposes.

“Well then, let's exchange addresses. Once I have a talk with Yurie, I'll send you an email.”

“Can we really!?”

Oohhh, to think that I would get Aira-sama's address!

The truth is, Aira-sama sports an androgenous short haircut, so around here, she's even more popular than the boys are.

There are plenty of girls who seem like they're even in love with Aira-sama, and some of them have bewitching fantasies about the beautiful princess Yurie-sama and her gallant knight Aira-sama.

...And I'm also one of the girls who secretly admire Aira-sama!

That's right! The one that I admire isn't Emperor. It's the Peony Knight, Aira-sama!

So don't get so cocky, you damned tyrant duo!

Or so I was thinking, but there's no way a coward like me could ever say it to their faces, so it's more like the rant of a loser but...

Anyway, that doesn't matter.

For now, it looks like I've been able to follow my directives.

After all, it looks like Aira-sama is going to help me out because she understands my

circumstances.

What's more, I even gained her email address as an unexpected reward, so I'm feeling completely pleased right now.

Now then, shall I go home?

Today Oniisama is going to be late due to prep studies isn't he. Tsk~ That's no fun.

I wonder if he'll make time for me tomorrow.

Lala, la~

Watching me walking out of the English class elated with my worries gone, was a boy in front of a black car, standing with his arms folded. Kaburagi Masaya.

CHAPTER 19

And so just like that, I was abducted by the Kaburagi car, and they immediately demanded the results of my spy work.

“How was it? I trust you did your job properly? I saw Aira walk into the building after all.”

Oh my god.

This person really is a stalker. So dangerous.

And perhaps, also somebody with too much free time?

“Aira-sama promised that she will ask Yurie-sama later for me. She should be contacting me in the near future.”

I’m definitely not telling him that we exchanged addresses.

If I let him know, then Emperor, now Stalker In-the-Making would definitely demand mine as well, and send me orders by email day and night.

That’s just how stalkers are.

“I see. Did she say anything else?”

Hm~mm, I really can’t say it, can I.

“What. Answer me.”

Uu, don’t glare at me. It’s scary.

“Umm, Aira-sama said, ‘threatening unwilling people and working them hard for your

own matters like this will just get Yurie even angrier.”

Waa, I said it.

But this is what *Aira-sama* said, okay? It wasn't me, okay?

Kaburagi blinked blankly.

“What unwilling people?”

Eh-, could it be that this kid is an idiot?

Not just a stalker, but an idiot too?

Incredibly arrogant, a stalker, and an idiot. So a total failure?

“Oi. You. You were thinking something rude just now, weren't you.”

“No, I would never dream of such a thing.”

Stop reading my mind!

Kaburagi stared hard at my face for a while, but he eventually snorted and stopped.

“Well whatever. When will Aira be contacting you?”

“I cannot say. Perhaps on Monday?”

“How is she contacting you? Are you going to go to the middle school area to ask?”

“Ummm... I wonder?”

He hit me where it hurtttt!

“What the heck. Go find out then. What now. Are you going to wait here until Aira’s lesson ends?”

Don’t joke with me.

Why do I have to do that much.

“No. In that case, I shall go ask Aira-sama on Monday.”

For now, let’s just avoid the problem with this.

“Hmm? Alright, got it. Monday, right? You better not forget.”

“Yes. I understand.”

Can I go home now?

“Oh yeah. You got a mobile?”

“No.”

When lying, absolutely do NOT look to the top right.

It’s what Oniisama taught me.

“Really?”

“My parents decided as such.”

Kaburagi is looking at me suspiciously.

Oh yeah. This guy can read minds. Keep calm, keep calm.

“May I leave now? My chauffeur will be worried.”

I want to retreat before I let up anything else.

“Eh, ahh, yeah. Well then, Monday then.”

“Yes.”

The moment that I stepped out of the Kaburagi car, as though he just remembered, Kaburagi added,

“By the way, who was that ‘unwilling person’ that you mentioned earlier?”

Flashing him a smile like Enjou’s, I said,

“That would be me, of course. Well then, gokigen’yoh, Kaburagi-sama.”

Leaving behind the gaping Kaburagi, I walked towards my family’s car.

I said it. I said it!

...But what am I going to do if he gets revenge.

Oniisama is coming home late today, so I was having dinner with just my parents.

That was when the bombshell dropped.

Otousama was smiling in a good mood when he asked,

“I heard from Sagami today that Masaya-kun from the Kaburagi clan went all the way

to your English class to meet you.”

GEHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

I was wondering why he seemed to be in a good mood, but was that why!?

Sagami is the name of the chauffeur that picked me up.

He picked me up, but the reason he didn't save me when I was abducted by some strange car was because he knew who they were, then.

And then he went and reported it to my parents, huh.

“When did you too become so close? Otousama had no idea.” (←this is the father speaking himself)

“No, Otousama. I have almost never spoken with Kaburagi-sama.”

It's no good. If I don't clearly refute him here, it'll end up in some situation where there's no going back.

“What are you saying? That Masaya-kun went out of his way to meet you, didn't he? Could it be that he's taken a liking to you?”

Uwahh, what an unthinkable misunderstanding!

Otousama's totally dreaming.

“Impossible. Saying things like that will trouble Kaburagi-sama, so please do not ever say such a thing again!”

Up until now, Otousama might have been hoping ambitiously that I'd marry him.

To begin with, that's how it was in the manga.

Aah, what do I do.

If only Oniisama were here!

“Why are you getting so irritated, Reika?”

“Because you are having strange misunderstandings, Otousama!”

This is bad. I can hear the footsteps of the approaching downfall.

The role of being majorly shamed at an engagement party? Definitely don't want it!

“Now, now, dear. Reika is still at an age where she's embarrassed about these things, so let's be more gentle about these things.”

Okaasama gently stopped him.

But even she's looking my way with expectation.

Please cut me a break~!

All of this is his fault! That Stalker Kaburagi's!

Wanting to vent these feelings of mine, I charged at Oniisama when he came back from prep school.

“And so, Otousama and Okaasama are having terrible misunderstandings. What should I do, Oniisama?”

I'm sorry for doing this when Oniisama is probably exhausted having just come home, but I'll be venting my complaints to him.

“If it's just the misunderstanding, then it'll clear itself on its own sometime. I'll talk to them and make sure they don't do anything rash. More importantly, will you be okay

with the thing with Masaya-kun?”

I left out what exactly Kaburagi wanted to hear from Aira-sama.

As well as the part about being intimidated. I don't want Oniisama to worry.

The reason that I didn't talk about Yurie-sama's thing is because although he really is a stalker, it still wouldn't sit right with me to go spreading details about somebody's love life.

“I think it will be okay.”

“That's good then.”

Oniisama patted my head.

Hahh~ Talking to Oniisama really does calm me down~

“Hey, Oniisama.”

“What?”

“Oniisama, in the future will you be inheriting the Kisshouin Corporation?”

“Well, yeah, I guess.”

“Please make sure to be honest in your management, okay?”

“What the heck?”

Only the sincere Oniisama can stop that ambitious Otousama!

Please, Oniisama, protect my peaceful future.

CHAPTER 20

Aira-sama messaged me on Saturday.

We chatted via email, and summing up the main points of our conversation,

- Yurie-sama is angry at the fact that he went too far, scrutinising her every action, and even using people in middle school to stop her from talking to male students.
- Yurie-sama is also angry at the fact that even though the boy who confessed to her was from another school, Kaburagi did something as violent as suddenly drop-kicking him.
- When he clearly understands why Yurie-sama is angry, and has reflected, she intends on forgiving him.
- When that happens, he will swear that he will honour her own desires, and will refrain from unreasonable surveillance and inteference.

Also, and this is big,

- He will swear not to get other people wrapped up for Yurie-sama's sake.

Naturally this includes me.

In fact, Aira-sama told Yurie-sama about Kaburagi forcing me to be a slave, and Yurie-sama apparently apologised to me.

Also, when I told Aira-sama about my lie about the mobile, she suggested that we meet early Monday morning to talk.

As expected of Aira-sama.

With my spy report with me, I triumphantly walked into school.

I was casually thinking that I would just go to the salon at lunch break to hand it to him, but I had forgotten about how little self-control he had.

Shortly after I arrived at school, Kaburagi barged into my classroom.

My classmates fell silent, and the jealousy and envy of the girls was particularly bad. I mean after all, Kaburagi Masaya who paid basically no attention to girls had now come all the way to another room to meet a female student (me).

What the hell has he done...

“Oi, how was it?”

Without even greeting me, suddenly jumping into that?

“Good morning, Kaburagi-sama. It would not do to speak here, so perhaps we should speak at lunch.”

So that the crowd couldn’t sense my inner turmoil, I stuck with my calm facade.

I’m begging you, please don’t say anything unnecessary in front of them.

This stalker is an idiot so I have no idea what kind of dangerous things he might say.

Aah, what am I going to do if the class finds out that I’m a gopher?

My position would plummet to the ground!

“No, say it now. I’m not gunna wait.”

Waittt daamnnn youuu~

It’s this lack of self-control that makes Yurie-sama angry, so hurry up and notice

already.

At this rate you won't be forgiven no matter how long you wait, you know?

"Very well. In that case, it is not a matter that we can discuss here, so shall we change locations?"

Anyway, I have to go somewhere without other people. If he calls me 'Gopher' here, I'm done for.

Also, the gazes from the crowd are too scary.

"Alright. Follow me."

Arrogant as always, huh~

The moment that we stepped out of the room, I could hear the girls screaming "What on earth was thattt!?" from behind me.

It looks like my days of peace are over.

Aahh, my head hurts...

"Now then, speak your results."

We didn't have time to go to the salon, so we just spoke in the corner of the hallway. Even though this place should be filled with people right now, with a glare from the Emperor the place cleared out.

Although I'm painfully aware that they're all paying attention from afar.

"Understood."

I took out the report from my pocket.

To begin with, would a normal person think to ask for the results first thing in the

morning even though I was supposed to be talking to Aira-sama the very same day?
Is he really just an idiot without a brain, or could it be that he expected me to prioritise his orders over everything else?
If it's the latter, then all the more reason to hate it, huh~

Stalker Kaburagi read the report with much intensity.

...I suppose you can call this honest in a sense, huhh~

When I was unrelated, I saw a primary school boy being this affected by his first love, so I had thought mellow stuff like 'How bittersweet~ How heartrending~', but now that I'm actually wrapped up in it, he just looks like a damned stalker that keeps causing me trouble.

"...So if I reflect like it says here, and I swear that I'll stop keeping Yurie under surveillance, she'll forgive me, huh?"

"That appears to be the case."

Kaburagi fell into thought.

"So when is that going to be?"

"Hah?"

What the heck is this guy saying.

"As I said, when you reflect..."

"I've reflected. Totally reflected. And I swear that I'll respect Yurie's decisions. Look, it's just like Yurie's demands. So today? Tomorrow? Or is she going to forgive me right now?"

Uehh...

What an annoying guy.

Was the Emperor always such an annoying kid in his youth?

Because he's always got a cold and bored expression, all the girls make a fuss and say stuff like 'He's so cool and dreamy!' and I also thought he was pretty cold for a primary schooler, but what 'cool'? He's just an idiot.

Everyone's been totally fooled.

"Masaya."

And at this point, Enjou Shuusuke came walking along.

"What are you doing in a place like this? And with Kisshouin-san as well."

Aaah, the annoyances have multiplied.

"Oohh, Shuusuke! Look at this! The spy's done good work!"

"Eh-, Kisshouin-san, have you already gone to ask Aira? You sure work fast, huh~"

Enjou peered in from the side at the report Kaburagi was holding.

"Hm~ I see. Well, isn't it just as we expected?"

"I said this just now as well, but I've already reflected, and I'll accept Yurie's conditions. So it's about time that Yurie forgives me, right?"

He really is a simple-minded idiot, huh~

“You sure are an idiot, Masaya~”

Uwa-, for a moment I thought my mind was being vocally projected.

“Shuusuke, you bastard, are you picking a fight with me?”

“Hey now, reflect, reflect. That short temper of yours is another reason Yurie is angry, you know?”

“Nothing like that was in the report!”

“Didn’t they teach us in Japanese class to read between the lines? Look, right here it mentions that you flying kicked a middle schooler from another school. Yurie was angry at your short-tempered actions. Get it now?”

Kaburagi fell into frustrated silence.

“Anyway, she isn’t going to believe that you’ve reflected from just your words. You need to show it in your attitude.”

“Then what the hell should I do.”

“Let’s see~ Kisshouin-san, do you have any good ideas?”

“Eh-?”

Why me?

I did just as instructed and went searching for Yurie-sama’s thoughts on the matter, so aren’t I relieved of duty already?

Your trusted friend has come already, so you shouldn't have a use for me anymore.
Or rather, I don't want anything to do with you.

And with good timing, the bell for class rang.

"Goodness. I must be leaving for class. Well then."

Hurry, hurry.

"Wait, Spy."

Kaburagi called for me to stop.

"You come up with something too. It's your assignment until lunch break."

HAHHHHHHHH???

Why the heck should I do that!?

And plotting isn't the job of a spy, right?

Please just give me a break already...

Enjou gave a troubled smile.

Uh, no, you're the one who turned the conversation to me, right?

Honestly, this is just the worst...

The moment I returned to class, the homeroom teacher came in, so for now I managed to avoid my hounding classmates.

Although it's just putting it off the short time until this one hour lesson is over.

My relationship with Kaburagi... What kind of lie would be good?

Even if I die, I won't admit that I'm his gopher.

What if I just said something normal like *"There has been a small matter he entrusted to me."*? I'd be troubled if they asked about what the matter was though.

Aahh, this week is off to such an unlucky start.

Chapter 21

Just as expected, the moment that the hour-long class ended, people began to swarm around my desk.

"What on earth was that, Reika-sama!?"

The first shot was fired by my classmate since year 1 and Follower #1, Serika-chan.

"You've never told us that you were close to Kaburagi-sama, you know?"

This too was a classmate since first grade, Follower #2, Kikuno-chan.

Amongst all my followers, these two are the ones known as the closest to me, and at times like these, they're the first to speak up.

"Please calm down, everybody. Kaburagi-sama and I are not particularly close."

"But for Kaburagi-sama to go out of his way to meet with a girl is,"

"The truth is, I have been entrusted with a certain matter, and we were simply discussing it, all right?"

"A certain matter? What kind of matter?"

"That is, something I do not have the right to talk about..."

At that moment, a sudden chorus of squeals came from around the door to our

classroom.

“Kisshouin-san, are you in?”

“ENJOU-SAMAAA!”

The girls around me began kicking up a fuss about him.

What the heck is this guy here for...

“Ah, there you are, Kisshouin-san. About our conversation with Masaya from earlier, when you’re finished with lunch, come to the Pivoine salon, okay?”

That line just caused a bigger fuss.

Aahh, my days of peace are...

“U-, Umm, Enjou-sama? Is it true that Reika-sama has been entrusted something by Kaburagi-sama?”

“Aah, mn. That’s right.”

Again with the squeals and cheers.

“What is it that she’s been entrusted with?”

“Sorry, but I can’t really say. If you girls pry too much, Masaya will get angry, you know? Won’t that be bad? Kisshouin-san is keeping quiet too, see?”

“Indeed.”

“See you later then,” smiled Enjou, before leaving the classroom.

Although the girls were still excited from Enjou’s sudden visit, his mention that Kaburagi Masaya would get angry at their prying stopped them from doing anything more, even though they would have happily hounded me otherwise.

Did that guy come to visit me during our short period-break just to tell me to come to the salon?

Hm~mm. Could it be that he knew that people would hound me about my relationship with Kaburagi, and came here to cover for me?

Hmm, is he really nice enough to do that?

But in the manga, he always casually covered for the protagonist, didn’t he. I guess that means he has it in him.

Hmmmmmm...

Well, either way it’s fine.

With this, perhaps even the girls who heard me become a gopher will keep quiet too. To begin with, those guys began all this, so covering for me this much is a given!

At lunch break, I was too afraid of what might happen if I didn’t go, so although I was reluctant from the depths of my heart, I headed to the salon.

Emperor was sitting cockily on his special seat as usual.

Isn’t he pretty energetic compared to last week?

Even though it would have been great if he just stayed a husk like that...

“Too slow!”

Honestly, I’m just not going to comment anymore...

“Kisshouin-san, how about you sit down for now?”

“Enjou-sama, thank you very much for following up earlier.”

Hearing my words, Enjou replied with a smile.

Hm~mm, so that really was his aim.

Not that I’m really grateful though.

“Oi, what are you guys on about?”

“Nothing. More importantly, aren’t we here to discuss what you’re gunna do?”

“Oh yeah! What do I do to convince Yurie that I’ve reflected?”

You’re seriously relying on others for this?

“How about you start with what you think, Masaya?”

“I think that in order to convey my feelings to Yurie, I should visit her each day to apologise!”

A STALKER’S IDEA!!

This guy hasn’t reflected at all, has he?

“Masaya, I think that would have the opposite effect.”

“WHY!?”

He’s so stupid that it’s almost refreshing.

“Then what do *you* think I should do!?”

“Don’t contact her at all until it all dies down, and then quietly wait for forgiveness.”

“VETOED!”

Well, it’s true that Stalker-kun here wouldn’t be able to handle it.

“Alright then. Spy! What do you think?”

Honestly, please just stop with that name already.

“Kaburagi-sama, my name is Kisshouin Reika. Please desist with the ‘spy’.”

It would be the absolute worst if he called me that in public.

“That’s right, Masaya. She’s helping you with advice, so at least use her name properly.”

“Hmph.”

He suuure has a crappy attitude.

Well, I already know he was this type of person though.

“Well? Do you have a good idea or not?”

He flicked his chin to prompt me.

Tsk...

“I suggest that you write a letter each day.”

“Letter?”

Right, a letter.

Although I think that Enjou’s idea of behaving quietly for a while is best, this ‘earnest guy’ (read: stalker) wouldn’t be able to bear it.

“How much you have reflected for example, or what you think of the situation and the like. Well, what they call a reflection essay, I suppose. I believe that a message through your phone would feel too impersonal, and would not convey your feelings as well. For that reason, a handwritten letter would be best. Write a letter that conveys your feelings to Yurie-sama. Since ancient times, Japan has always had the tradition of romances that begin with a love letter.”

“Is that true!?”

Well, who knows.

“Please write it carefully and wholeheartedly. Choose paper and an envelope that you think Yurie-sama would like. Doing things this way will also serve as a way to show that you are thinking of her feelings without impressing your own on her. Perhaps a small bouquet from time to time would also be appropriate. And never, ever send a large one.”

“Why? If I’m going to show my feelings for her, bigger would be better, right?”

“That would be too pushy. A smaller bouquet is a way of expressing your first love as a junior. Appeal to Yurie-sama’s feelings.”

“F-, First love!?”

“What are you saying after all this time? The entire school is aware. More importantly, once school ends today, please immediately go shopping for a letter-writing set.”

Kaburagi turned red and sputtered for a moment at the words ‘first love’, but he eventually pulled himself back together and said,

“Alright! I’ll use your suggestion! After school we’re going shopping for a letter set! You two know your jobs, right!”

Eh-, what the heck is he on about?

“I will not be going.”

“Hah? Why?”

That’s what I should be asking. Why the heck do I have to go?

“I have lessons after school. And in addition, Kaburagi-sama? I believe it was written in my report earlier. “He will swear not to get other people wrapped up for Yurie-sama’s sake.” If you involve me in this matter, Yurie-sama will become angry again.”

After falling silent for a while, Kaburagi replied,

“...Got it. Good work.”

“Yes. Well then, I take my leave. Gokigen’yoh.”

I flashed a smile, and left the salon.

Afterwards, the letter strategy was a success, and feeling moved, Yurie-sama apparently forgave him.

The strategy succeeded without a hitch.

In the end I retired from my life as a spy, and returned to being just a normal girl.

Please don't look for me.

CHAPTER 22

After I retired from spying, I had almost no contact with those two, and spent my days in peace.

The fact that I was turned into a gopher wasn't revealed either, and I managed to escape the downfall in hierarchy that I had dreaded.

Actually far from it, there's this misunderstanding now that *"Reika-sama is close enough to that Kaburagi-sama that he would personally rely on her"* and I'm even the target of some weird envy.

No, no, we're not close, I said.

Since then, we've almost never spoken, so please don't look at me with those expectant eyes.

As for Aira-sama, since then we've continued to message each other once in a while. What an extravagant mail buddy!

Aside from advice with studying and talks about her middle school life, she also tells me about how Kaburagi and Yurie-sama are doing.

It was also through Aira-sama that I heard about the success of the letter strategy. With a letter written with all of Kaburagi's heart, and a cute bouquet arriving every day, Yurie-sama folded pretty quickly.

Apparently Aira-sama didn't get to actually read it, but the envelope and writing paper that Yurie-sama showed here were all different varieties, and had cute flowers and animals drawn on them.

It looks like he properly followed my advice.

Since letters about how lonely he was and how hard it was by himself came every day on that cute kind of paper, given that Yurie-sama thought of him as a cute little brother to begin with, apparently her maternal instincts and guilt shook her resolve.

Persuasion by sob story, huh. I'm sure it was Enjou's idea.

Cunningly, he even wrote about how he wanted to dance with her at this year's summer party and got a promise from her.

As expected of Enjou. Turning even bad luck into opportunity.

And truly, when it came to the summer party, maybe he was hiding his shyness because his face looked unhappy and he was all red and stuff, but he really did end up dancing with Yurie-sama.

Could it be that he saw my waltz with Oniisama and longed for the same thing?

That he hoped that he could do it one day as well?

Even now, Kaburagi is a little shorter than Yurie-sama, but the difference in their height has shrunk since my dance with Oniisama, so maybe he's been biding his time.

As for the waltz itself, even if he's like *that* he's still Kaburagi, so he lead Yurie-sama even though he's just a little primary schooler.

All the Ojousamas were entranced by it.

I just wanted to snort, and chewed on some roast beef instead.

Also, apparently he really did reflect, because Kaburagi's stalker attitude calmed down as well.

It seems like he's training himself each day to become more suitable for the older Yurie.

At school, he's got the same cool poker face as usual, and the girls all squeal and make a fuss, but now that I know his true face, I can't help but want to tell somebody.

But if I did that, it'd set me straight on the path to destruction, so when I get home I sink my face into my pillow and scream "HE'S ACTUALLY AN IDIOT YOU KNOWWWW!" "AND HE'S ALSO A STALKER YOU KNOWWWW!" "DON'T BE FOOLEDDDD!" to relieve my stress.

And so as days like that passed, one day I suddenly received an email from my (in my mind, at least) mail buddy Aira-sama, inviting me to go out during the school anniversary.

A DATE WITH A KNIGHT!!

Of course I'll go! No matter what, I'll go!

Aahh, oh my goodness!

The role of princess is always played by her best friend Yurie-sama, but for just today I'll get to be the princess that she protects!?

The maid helped me curl my hair into the usual hairstyle that my mother likes. She even added a ribbon to the back of my head, and I looked like a fake Rococo Queen.
[←Mary Antoinette]

But with this Fake Rococo Queen Hair, isn't it kind of like that manga I read in my past life? The one about the French revolution, with the beautiful cross dressing female knight, and the tragic queen that she protected?

UKYAAAAAAH!

When I quickly went to brag to Oniisama about my outing with Aira-sama, he said that it was dangerous for just two girls, so he and his friend Imari-sama would be coming along as well.

Aahh, oh my goodness!

Not just Aira-sama, but Oniisama and Imari-sama as well!

Aira-sama in my right and, Imari-sama in my left, and Oniisama at my back! Hah-!? Could this be that situation that's all the rage in shoujo manga? The so-called reverse harem situation!?

Aahh, my spring has finally...

Momozono Imari-sama has been Oniisama's friend since primary, and is a splendid person that I've had the pleasure of meeting a few times.

The truth is, Imari-sama is actually the one who gave me the idea for the small bouquets.

When Imari-sama comes over to play, he always gives me (his friend's little sister) a small and cute bouquet, and a few sweets and the like.

As for the sweets, they're things like honey in a beautiful jar, or a box of assorted flower-shaped chocolates; just things that a girl would very likely appreciate.

Even though he shouldn't have any sisters, at 11th grade he's already splendid at dealing with girls, and really seems like the type that trouble will follow.

But he always gives me lots of stuff.

Of course, I *do* like Imari-sama who's both kind and somewhat dangerous, you know? Women prefer men with a little danger over a plainly kind and no-risk guy. That's why I think that in the future, Imari-sama will become an enemy of womankind, and honestly I'm quite looking forw-, ...quite worried about him.

Anyway, Imari-sama is a different kind of ikemen to Oniisama.

It's the same with Enjou and Kaburagi too, but why do hot guys always seem to be friends with other hot guys?

Speaking of which, I wonder who Akizawa-kun is good friends with...

.....

...I think I'd better stop playing innocent while thinking about these no-good ideas.

I mean, Akizawa-kun has big round eyes, and is cute in his own way too, isn't he.

I love your friendly face, Akizawa-kun!

When I asked Aira-sama whether it was okay for the two of them to come, she happily agreed.

The place we're going is the most popular amusement park in Japan.

I wonder if everybody will be willing to wear animal-ear headbands with me.

Oniisama seems like he'd definitely hate it.

We're going on a weekday, but it'll probably be really packed, huhh... I'd better eat and sleep well so I'm in peak condition for the day.

Just a little bit longer until my bewitching reverse-harem date!

By the way, according to my Aira-sama Intelligence, Kaburagi and Yurie-sama's school anniversary date (at least that's what he thinks of it) went splendidly without a hitch.

They went to a museum.

I wouldn't expect any less.

CHAPTER 23

Just a note, but strictly speaking, if you're being polite in Japanese, you refer to a person's siblings etc. by honorific terms, e.g. onesan, imouto-san, otousan, otouto-san etc.

The day of the school's founding anniversary was met with clear blue skies. Perfect for a day at the amusement park.

Being surrounded by three people who each sparkled in their own way, my mood was as good as it gets.

I wanted to get on as many rides as possible, so we arrived just before it opened.

The first rides were naturally the famous rollercoasters. You have to get on the most popular ones before the place gets packed, right?

Apparently some rich kids will hire somebody to stand in line for them, but we lined up ourselves.

Getting somebody to line up for you feels kind of unfair, and it would make all the other visitors unhappy, right?

It was tiring standing there the whole time, but if you spend the time chatting, it's fun too, isn't it!

Both the middle schoolers and high schoolers at Suiran share the same Pivoine, so although they weren't particularly close, apparently the three of them had spoken a few times before.

Aira-sama was happily listening to Imari-sama talk about high school.

Thank goodness. Since she didn't know them very well, I was worried about whether Aira-sama would be bored.

If she's having fun, then I'm happy too.

The other guests lined up occasionally glance our way.

Aahh, I see. They can't help themselves because these three are so sparkly, right? I know how they feel.

The three being looked at didn't seem to enjoy it very much. Please just think of it as providing entertainment for everybody else bored in the line, and allow it.

Having a look around, I found that it was mostly groups of friends, but there was the occasional couple too.

From an objective point of view, do we look kind of like a double date?

When Imari-sama and Aira-sama stand next to each other, they look like an attractive couple. Mn mn.

Then what about Oniisama?

A pitiful person who had no girl to bring to the double date, and so brought along his little sister instead?

Oh no! My Oniisama looks like a hopeless case to people!?

My Oniisama is really popular too, okay!? On Valentines Day he got heaps of chocolates too!

He's not some sad case who has nobody to invite but his sister, okay!

"Reika, are you thinking about something weird again?"

Oniisama looked my way suspiciously.

What on earth could you be speaking of?

I got on the ride together with Aira-sama.

I mean, it's common sense that the escort for the Rococo Queen has to be a knight, right!

Imari-sama seemed to have complicated feelings about riding together with a guy, but this is natural.

Also, I need to protect Aira-sama from Imari-sama's charm!

Hm? Am I being a third wheel?

After having a try at all of the rollercoasters, it was about time to head to the less extreme rides, or so I was thinking when shockingly Imari-sama bought us churros!

Food tasting!

I've always wanted to go food tasting!



Happy! Yummy!

Tasting foods from stalls and the like would normally be absolutely forbidden as the young lady of the Kisshouin family.

But it's okay today! Amazing! I'm so glad I came!

Thanks for buying this, Imari-sama.

As expected of a lady killer who understands what a girl wants! An enemy of womankind! It feels like I might accidentally fall for him.

Aahh, I'm so happy. As I was walking about, nomming with a smile, a group of girls called out to Oniisama and Imari-sama.

Apparently they were high school girls from Suiran. Since it's Suiran's founding anniversary, they probably came to play just like us.

"To think that we would meet Momozono-sama and Kisshouin-sama here at the park!"

"Honestly, Imari-sama, you're here even though you turned us down when we invited you."

“You know, I saw Kisshouin-sama when I went to watch the match at the kyudo dojo. He was sooo wonderful.”

“My! I saw it too.”

Amazing. It’s like watching fans who have spotted an idol.

They’re making such a big deal of it.

Aira-sama and I were quietly eating our churros a distance away, while watching to see how things played out.

Could it be that one of these girls was one of the ones who gave Oniisama a Valentines chocolate?

Including courtesy chocolates, each year Oniisama brings back 20~30 of them.

Ah, there are girls whose hearts are captured by Oniisama among them as well.

Alright. Sister-in-law Switch, ON!

“Momozono-sama, Kisshouin-sama, is it just the two of you today?”

“No way. We’re here with Takateru’s imouto-chan and her senpai.”

“His, imouto-sama?”

You notice now, after all this time?

“Gokigen’yoh. I am Kisshouin Takateru’s younger sister, Reika.”

“I’m a second year in the middle school, Minazuki Aira. Please take care of us, Senpais.”

I probably don’t look too great with a churro in one hand, but I greeted them with a smile.

“Goodness! Kisshouin-sama’s imouto-sama!? It is a pleasure to meet you!”

They each began to introduce themselves too.

But although they smiled at me just fine since I was Oniisama’s sister and a primary schooler, the looks they gave Aira-sama were a little harsh.

Did they recognise her as a rival?

But Aira-sama’s enemies are *my* enemies!

My Sister-in-Law Radar is beeping, you know.

Besides, Aira-sama was introduced as my senpai, so aren’t their judging gazes pretty rude? Well, being a beauty with a dignified bearing, it looks like they’re faltering a little though.

It’s wonderful how Aira-sama isn’t perturbed by anything.

Oh? There are also a few onesamas who are blushing at Aira-sama. So these are *my* rivals!?

“Heyy, Momozono-sama, isn’t it fine if you come hang with us a little?”

“Well, I mean we did meet up here after all. Right, Momozono-sama? Kisshouin-sama?”

“Kisshouin-sama really is kind, spending a holiday on an outing with his sister.”

“Kisshouin-sama, have you eaten? Should it please you, we would very much like you to join us.”

“Imari-sama.”

“Sorry, but,”

Oniisama gave a gentle smile,

“I promised that I would spend the day with my sister and her friend Aira-san. I apologise, but could we perhaps do this some other time?”

“Eh-, but...”

“I don’t want my sister to hate me for neglecting her. Sorry about this.”

said Oniisama, with a troubled smile.

It seems that when they saw his face, they couldn’t say anything forceful anymore.

“I don’t want Imouto-chan to hate me either~ Sorry. Cya tomorrow at school.”

“...I understand. It is a shame, though.”

Imari-sama took advantage of Oniisama’s response. I don’t doubt Oniisama’s love for me, but didn’t Imari-sama totally use me as an excuse?

Well, since he treated me to churros, I’ll forgive him I guess.

I thought that the girls might secretly follow us anyway, but it looks like they properly observed etiquette.

And so we went back to enjoying the amusement park.

Since there was a middle schooler and primary schooler in our group, we decided to head back home before it got too dark.

We each had our own cars coming to pick us up, so we said our goodbyes right there.

Oniisama and I both got onto our Kisshouin family’s car.

“Reika, since we’re already outside, do you want to eat out?”

“EHHH!?”

Dinner with just Oniisama!

I definitely wanna go!

“I do!”

“Mn. Then is there anything you want to eat?”

Something I want to eat?

Hm~mm. Since we may as well, I want to eat something simple and plebby. My tongue is starving for the taste of commoner food.

Since it's Oniisama, he might let me.

Curry rice, pork fried with ginger, grilled fish set meal, ramen...



“Omurice!”

The omurice of a good set-meal shop is yummy.

I've had the Kisshouin chef make it a few times, but a normal shop's omurice is just different, you know?

“Omurice, huh. Got it.”

And then the place I was taken to was the Marunouchi commercial district, and a high class restaurant with a nightview far from anything you'd see in a set-meal shop.

The place was dark, with a weak spot-light for each table, so it was crazy atmospheric. Huh? This is kind of different from what I was thinking.

The price next to the omurice on the menu was something unimaginable for a former commoner like myself.

S-, So expensive... Even though this was supposed to be a commoner dish.

When they brought in the omurice, the golden egg and demi-glace sauce glittered in the spot lighting. I unconsciously wanted to use honorifics with it.

The flavour was absolutely not plebeian, but it tasted incredible, so I guess this is fine too.

“Speaking of which, you and Imari-sama were quite popular today, weren't you.”

When I said that, Oniisama looked a little unhappy.

“Leaving you aside, Oniisama, would Imari-sama not have preferred playing with those girls over children like Aira-sama and I?”

“...It's because Imari has a girlfriend.”

“EEH!?”

That's the first I've heard of it!

“This is the first time *I* have heard of it!”

“Well that's because I didn't say.”

“Then all the more reason. Would it not have been better to spend the holiday with his

girlfriend instead?”

“She goes to a different school, so.”

Oh my god!

To think that Imari-sama had a girlfriend! But well, given how cool and kind he is, it's not really that surprising I guess.

Aira-sama seemed to be getting along with Imari-sama today, but she definitely hasn't fallen for him, right?

On the car home, I immediately texted Aira-sama to thank her for today.

And while I was at it, before she could say anything, I made sure to write, “Just now Oniisama told me that Imari-sama has a girlfriend. I was so shocked! I wonder what kind of person she is. Ah, please keep this as a secret between just the two of us, okay? Aira-sama”.

I don't think it would happen, but if on the off chance that Aira-sama fell for Imari-sama and she confessed to me “The truth is I love Imari-sama” or something, I'd be really troubled.

I love Aira-sama, so I'd hate for things to become awkward between us more than anything.

The reply that came later said, “I heard about this from Imari-sama today, you know? I heard about how their relationship began as well, but would you like to know?” so it turns out I was just totally worrying for nothing.

What the heck am I even doing.

CHAPTER 24

A stalking-horse character is, in romance stories, the rival used to urge the main characters into a relationship. Or into a deeper relationship. Basically they had no chance to begin with, and were only introduced into the story to push the main couple along. Like um, what was his name? The werewolf dude from Twilight. He had a team, and... Was it Team... Jacob?

An ojousama has her own ojousama's circle of acquaintances.

Myself included, an ojousama has lots of different lessons to go to. And those lessons often have showcases or recitals.

Honestly speaking, I can't imagine that anybody outside of family would want to watch a bunch of kids dance or perform. But with just family alone, the seats wouldn't fill up and it wouldn't look very good, so those in high society often go to each other's events, which also serve as chances to socialise.

And so, today I went to a violin recital because of that.

Okaasama came with me to the recital, and apparently she hadn't given up on her dreams of me learning the violin yet, because she asked me stuff like 'How about you use this opportunity to start learning yourself?'.
No thank you.

At my mother's strong insistence, I went to a trial classroom once, but the finger that held down the string hurt. There was so much friction that it felt like my fingerprint would burn off. That day I decided that I was a bit too squishy for violin.

Likewise, at my mother's recommendation, I tried the flute as well, but I still have nightmares about my last life when during the recorder recital I could only blow this pathetic and ridiculous '*puupiiii~*' sound from beginning to end and ruined it for everyone, so I've got a bit of a trauma about wind instruments now.

When everybody returned to class afterwards and yelled “Who the hell made that sound!?” and began searching for the culprit, I was seriously terrified.

I joined in and made this *‘Ehh~ I don’t know either~’* face, but inside, my heart was pounding. The fact that the kids who sat next to me were tightlipped was the only reason I barely escaped my death.

So when it comes to music, please just give me a break, and let me stay with just piano.

When the recital was over, we headed out to the lobby to hand out bouquets.

While I was waiting, I looked about randomly and spotted somebody surprising.

“Akizawa-kun?”

Just like us, Akizawa-kun was standing there a little distance away with a bouquet in hand.

I told Okaasama that I had a friend here, so I left her and headed over to him.

“Akizawa-kun? Whatever are you doing in a place like this?”

“Eh-, Kisshouin-san!?”

When he turned around, Akizawa-kun was shocked to see me too.

“Why are you here, Kisshouin-san? Umm, today my childhood friend was in the recital, so I came to watch, but what about you?”

“Something similar as well. A friend was performing.”

While we were talking, Okaasama, and a person who seemed to be Akizawa-kun’s okaasama came over.

“Reika-san, who might this gentleman be?”

“Ah-, Okaasama. This is Akizawa-kun. He is in my grade in Suiran, and we attend the same cram school, you know.”

“It’s nice to meet you. I’m Akizawa Takumi.”

When Okaasama found out that he was a student at Suiran, she smiled happily. I greeted Akizawa-kun’s okaasama as well.

While our mothers were exchanging greetings, we went back to our own conversation from before.

“By ‘childhood friend’, do you perhaps mean the one that gave you chocolates on Valentines?”

“Ah, that’s the one. To think you’d remember that. She lives in my neighbourhood, so our families have been close since we were little. She’s in the same grade as us, but she’s like a little sister to me.”

“A little sister?”

“Yeah, since we were small she’s always been following me around, and we went to the same kindergarten. When we had to go to different schools, she started bawling. It was terrible, you know. For today too, she told me that I absolutely had to come.”

Akizawa-kun, you...

At that moment, the performers and their families started to enter the lobby.

“Takumi!”

A Japanese-styled beauty with long black hair called out his name, as she trotted over to him.

“Ahh, Sakurako, good job! Your performance was great.”

Akizawa-kun met her with a smile.

When the girl heard his praise, she smiled happily with a flushed face, but the moment she saw me standing next to him, her expression turned bewildered.

“Takumi, who’s this person?”

“Ahh, this is Kisshouin-san. She’s in my cohort at Suiran, and we’re in the same class for cram school. Our classes at school are different though.”

‘Right?’ he asked me with an innocent smile.

Seeing that, Childhood Friend-chan started to look sullen.

“And this is the childhood friend I mentioned, Fukioka Sakurako.”

“I am Kisshouin Reika. It is a pleasure.”

“...Fukioka Sakurako.”

Her face clearly says that she isn’t happy to see me.

Aahh, this settles it.

“Takumi, it can’t be that you came with her, right?”

“Nuh uh. Apparently Kisshouin-san’s friend was in the recital as well. We met by chance a little while ago. Right, Kisshouin-san?”

Once again, he smiled at me, at which point Fukioka-san’s expression grew more and more severe.

Ah-, she’s glaring.

“I never heard about any of your friends being female, Takumi. Even though when you talk about them, only male names come up...”

“Really? Well, we basically only ever talk at cram school, so,”

“Are you... close?”

“Ehh~ I wonder about that. We don’t hate each other, right?”

“Eh-? Y-, Yes. That is true.”

Fukioka-san looked sadly at Akizawa-kun.

Oh my god.

I made light of this guy. Even though I thought he was just a loveless, normal primary schooler like me...

To think that he was holding the hidden trump card of all romantic cliches, ‘a sizzling love with a childhood friend’!!

Akizawa-kun who I thought was my comrade in no-romances was actually in a completely different realm to me to begin with.

I should have realised the moment he mentioned the yearly chocolates from her. It wasn’t courtesy chocolates, nor was it friendship chocolates, it was the real damn

thing chocolates.

To think that I grouped myself together with a guy who had such a powerful romance card. I want to apologise to Akizawa-kun with a sliding dogeza now.

Apparently Akizawa-kun had no idea why Fukioka-san was upset, and carelessly asked “What’s wrong?”.

Cliche. It’s so cliche. The “romantically slow childhood friend” cliche.

Akizawa-kun, it feels like you’re so far away now...

To Fukioka-san, Akizawa-kun is the childhood friend that she loves, and who has always been by her side, so I guess that makes me the suddenly-appearing villainess rival character.

Even though Kimidol’s protagonist hasn’t even appeared yet, why the heck do I have to be the stalking horse in some random other place?

A sordid love triangle even in primary school? No thank you.

My ojousama companions who invited me appeared in the lobby, so I gratefully used them to retreat.

“Okaasama, Emiri-sama is here. We must hand her the flowers.”

“My, so she has. Well then, Akizawa-sama, I look forward to our next meeting. Well then, please excuse us. We shall be leaving first.”

“Please excuse us, and gokigen’yoh, Akizawa-kun, Fukioka-san.”

“See you at cram school, Kisshouin-san.”

“...Gokigen’yoh.”

I could feel Fukioka-san's gaze stabbing painfully into my back.

When I left the venue later, it was snowing.

No wonder I felt so cold.

CHAPTER 25

The next week at cram school, I asked Akizawa-kun about how Fukioka-san was after that.

“Mmmm, for some reason she seemed awfully conscious of you.”

“I thought so.”

In her position, I’d be interrogating him to the end.

“I think she had some weird misunderstanding about you.”

“A weird misunderstanding? Specifically?”

“She kept asking if I liked you, or if you liked me instead. Ah-! Of course, I denied it, okay!? Because I definitely don’t think that you like me in that way! Sorry if I made you feel bad.”

“No, it is fine.”

I’m not angry. It’s quite often that that’s how it is, after all.

“It looks like Fukioka-san likes you, Akizawa-kun.”

I decided to say it with conviction.

“Ueeeh-!? What the heck are you saying so suddenly. Eh? Eh?”

“Now now, calm down. Well? How about it? Have you noticed her feelings?”

“Feelings? I mean, we’re like siblings...”

“What on earth are you doing saying such tepid things. The fact that Fukioka-san is in love with you is as clear as day. Well, how about it? Are you saying that you have *not* noticed her feelings?”

Akizawa-kun went silent.

“Even if you fall silent, you shall not escape me.”

“Uu... Aren’t you acting a little differently than usual? Aahh, as for Sakurako liking me, I’m not really sure. I know that she’s fond of me, but it might just be as childhood friends, right? Ah, but in kindergarten she said... Umm, she said that she wanted to marry me, so,”

Cliche.

“And so since then, she has been giving you Valentines chocolate each year. After all, you two are always visiting each other’s homes, correct?”

“Eh-, you could tell?”

“Of course I could tell.”

I’ve seen through it all.

“I suppose that given that your families are close as well, since little, they have been saying things such as ‘It’d be great if these two got married, huh~’ or ‘I wonder if

Sakurako-chan would be willing to join our family as a bride~' 'My! Please do take her' as well?"

"How come you know!? That's exactly right."

Of course, of course.

"I can see your future, Akizawa-kun."

"Eh-, what the heck?"

"In the future, if you marry anybody other than Fukioka-san, the relationship between your Okaasama and your wife will be strained."

"How come?"

"Your Okaasama has been thinking all these years that it would be good if you married Fukioka-san, whom she dotes on. And Fukioka-san desires this as well. But then, if you brought along some other woman, naturally they would feel displeased. If Fukioka-san cried in secret, things would be terrible. Your Okaasama would hate your wife."

"Mum wouldn't..."

In my past life, on the Thursday night drama I watched, it was terrifying when the guy married a woman his mother didn't like.

"And so, Akizawa-kun, you must be prepared to choose."

"Prepared?"

Akizawa-kun turned a little pale.

“In the case that you choose to accept Fukioka-san’s feelings, you must be prepared to eventually marry her someday. At the end of the day, you two are family friends. If the two of you break up midway, things will become extremely awkward. If in the case that you choose not to accept her feelings, then it would be better to say so as soon as possible. If you continue to drag this out, one day...”

“One day?”

“One day it will be a bloodbath.”

Since the teacher arrived, class began.

Akizawa-kun was pale and couldn’t concentrate on class, but I said what I needed to, so I was feeling refreshed now.

It’s definitely not because I’m jealous of his cliched protagonist position, and felt like bullying him a little.

Since then, for some reason Akizawa-kun started consulting me about Fukioka-san.

When they were in kindergarten, his childhood friend Fukioka Sakurako failed the Suiran entrance on purpose, and decided to commute to a Catholic-style ojou-sama school.

Since their families lived nearby, they’ve been close since they were born, and it was the same even in kindergarten, so she wanted to go to the same school as Akizawa-kun, but because Fukioka-san’s okaasama is an alumni of Yurinomiya Girls School, she wanted her daughter to go to the same school no matter what, and so Fukioka-san tearfully gave up on Suiran.

But lately, that Fukioka-san has been talking about wanting to join Suiran again.

Nine cases out of ten, it's because of me.

When I met her the other day I thought that she was a graceful and proper Japanese-styled beauty, but when it comes to romance, she seems to be the reckless type.

A female mini-Kaburagi, I guess?

"What am I supposed to do."

"Let us see..."

Honestly speaking, I have absolutely no experience outside of reading shoujo manga in my past life.

I'm not the type of person who should be giving out romantic advice to others.

Now then, what to do.

"For now, Fukioka-san's greatest worry would be myself, correct? In that case, what if Fukioka-san attended this cram school as well? After all, the two of us rarely interact at school."

To be honest, this seems like it'd be even more bothersome, so I actually don't want her coming here.

But it's for Akizawa-kun's sake. Can't be helped.

So well, I guess if she sees for herself that 'I'm not a rival, you know~ I'm just a normal friend to him, you know~' then it's all good.

Akizawa-kun immediately suggested this to Fukioka-san, and apparently she would be attending come Spring, when we enter 5th grade.

And to Akizawa-kun who hadn't quite made up his mind, the fact that her Valentines chocolate was even grander this year, was a little scary to him.

As for me, I guess as usual, I was just pulling the noose around my own neck.

CHAPTER 26

Spring came, and I entered Year 5.

In 5th Grade, our classes change around.

Perhaps my desperate prayers worked because I avoided the Kaburagi-Enjou duo again.

My own luckiness terrifies me.

Given that we change class two times, I thought that I would end up in one of their classes at least once. There are only four classes each time after all.

But despite that, I won with a powerful draw!

Aahh, with this, I'll be able to spend my time peacefully until I graduate from primary.

Now that I was in Year 5, the number of my underclassmen continued to grow, and the number of Enjou and Kaburagi fans grew as well.

As for the girls in *our* grade, my two followers glare at the younger girls and say stuff like "I would really appreciate it if younger students knew their place, and stopped acting so friendly with Kaburagi-sama and Enjou-sama."

Not only that, girls in the same classes as those two had their guards particularly high. Even when some brave underclassman gains the courage to stand outside their class to watch, those girls never let them close. Truly an impenetrable defence.

When I watch all those girls, I start to want to scream 'Don't be fooled by their appearances!'

Fukioka-san started attending cram school.

Even though Akizawa-kun was supposed to have fully explained things, as I thought, she still hadn't cleared all her misgivings about me.

The girl her self is from an all-girl's school, so I suppose it can't be helped that she

worries about Akizawa-kun going to a co-ed. It would be better if he was at least in an all-boy's school, huh?

"Sakurako. Kisshouin-san is the one that suggested you come to cram school, okay? Get along with her."

"...Good afternoon. Um, thank you for inviting me."

While quietly holding onto Akizawa-kun's sleeve, she greeted me.

Mmmmmn. A Japanese-style bishoujo. And with a cuteness that makes you want to protect her, I see.

"Thank you for coming. Isn't it wonderful that you can spend more time with your beloved Akizawa-kun?"

"Eh-?"

"Hey-, Kisshouin-san!"

Fujioka-san flushed red at my words, but Akizawa-kun flew into a panic.

Give it up already, Akizawa-kun. Being a kind person like you, it's already impossible for you to escape from her.

If your cute Childhood Friend-chan starts crying in front of you, I doubt you'd be able to leave her.

To begin with, as a fellow girl, it seems to be as though the types that boys like to protect are actually the most stubborn and firm ones, aren't they.

Although almost none of the boys ever realise it, huh?

Just how many times in my old life had I been used and betrayed by those types...?

No, it's not like I'm saying Fujioka-san is like that, okay?

Ever since that first greeting on the first day, Akizawa-kun and Fukioka-san have been sitting together, and I've been by myself.

Being the kind person that he is, Akizawa-kun invited me to sit with them, but Fukioka-san looked unhappy about that, so I decided to pass on it. I don't have a hobby of interfering with other people's romances, okay?

And so, for the first time in a while, I went to the convenience store.

There were new sweets out, so I bought them to try. And while I was at it, I wanted the taste of the plebs, so I bought a nattou roll as well.

Quite a good haul.

It was about time to head back to class, so I had decided to go to the bathroom when I suddenly heard the sounds of girls gossiping.

"Drill Hair got her boyfriend stolen by the new girl, didn't she?"

"Yeah, yeah. She got dumped, and now she's all alone."

"The poor thing~ Isn't it tough to go to the same class as your ex and his new girlfriend?"

"Right?"

"She's probably too proud to quit."

"Well yeah, Drill Hair looks like the proud type."

"She's a Suiran kid after all~ And she's even got drill hair, so."

—What the!?

It looks like that's how everybody else interpreted what happened.

What completely off-base accusations.

And what's more, they actually all call me 'Drill Hair'...?

'Drill Hair'... At least call me Rococo or Antoinette or something.

Doesn't 'drill hair'(JP: vertical roll) sound like the name of some sort of bread?

Uwahh, I'm getting depressed.

I'm not a proud type, you know? I do have drill hair though...

If we're talking about the Kisshouin Reika in the manga, then she absolutely wouldn't allow such a rumour, but I don't have any of the courage needed to march up to them and complain, so I just walked right past the bathroom and went back to class.

When I got home, I binged in stress.

There's one other thing I should mention about cram school.

Up until now, I've only been attending classes for Japanese and maths.

But my grades in science and social studies are starting to become dangerous, so this year I'm attending those classes for cram school as well.

The truth is, I've actually been suspicious about these last few years of science and social studies.

When I'm in class, the content makes me wonder if I really actually did this stuff in primary school. Well, of course I probably did. I guess I just totally forgot.

Basically the only thing I remember about science in primary was playing around with magnets and iron sand. Even Orion is basically the only constellation I remember.

Useless...

As for social studies, the merging of cities and towns has been really intense, and the names that come up are all places I've never heard of. I don't know much about the regional specialties of Japan either. Far from it, I don't even know what prefectures are in the San'in region.

I have nooo idea about the names of rivers. I can'ttt remember the names of fields. I have no advantage at all over the other kids.

I've completely lost all academic advantage from my previous life...

Useless... Old Me, you're useless!

It's because you did nothing but relax with sweets everyday as you giggled to yourself reading shoujo manga, you brain-rotten idiot!

Even though you remember all this useless stuff, you forgot everything you learnt at school!

If that brain of yours is only going to remember fujoshi crap like how Tokugawa Iemitsu was a h * mo, then just have some dignity and forget everything to begin with!

So far I've somehow managed by studying by myself and getting Oniisama to tutor me, but the classes are getting harder, and Oniisama is busy with his own studies, which is why I decided to go to cram school for those subjects too.

In my new science and social studies classes, there were a few boys from Suiran. But none of them spoke to me like Akizawa-kun did.

Although they seem to be glancing my way for some reason.

Hmph. I bet they're afraid of my drill hair.

Thinking about it like this, Akizawa-kun was pretty precious.

I only realise it now that I've lost him. How blessed I was to have him.

That feels nostalgic to me now.

I've been feeling a little sentimental these days.

CHAPTER 27

“YOISSHOOOOO!”

Lately I’ve been getting the feeling that I’m getting a little chubby, so I decided to exercise each night.

It’s a routine of push-ups, sit-ups, and squats.

And at present, I’m currently tackling a 50-continuous-squats challenge.

“YOISHOOOOO!”

It’s pretty tough.

I folded my arms behind my head and tried following the diagram, but my legs started shaking in no time.

But this is all a matter of spirit.

Just a little more.

“YOISHOOOOO!”

You can’t become beautiful overnight.

It’s important that you build up your hard work every day.

Now then, just three more!

“YOISHOOOOO!”

Phew, I sure worked up a sweat.

I got out of the bath just a while ago, but I’ll probably have a quick shower now too.

Just as I left my room, I bumped into Oniisama.

“Oh my, whatever is the matter, Oniisama?”

For some reason his expression seemed perplexed.

“Well, I think I heard some weird sounds just now.”

“Sounds?”

I didn’t hear a thing though.

Ha-! Could it be a thief? It can’t be a ghost, right?

“Is this house haunted by a ghost?”

Oh gosh, so scary. Even though I’m terrible with ghost stories!

“What should we do, Oniisama? I wanted to go take a shower too. I hear that ghosts always appear in bathrooms.”

Even in horror films, it’s always in the shower room that serial killers attack.

What do I do. Should I just bear with it and go without a shower tonight?”

“I don’t think so. I’ve never heard about a ghost in this house after all. Just relax and have your shower.”

“But~”

“I think the weird sounds were just my imagination. Sorry for scaring you.”

“Truly? If *you* say so, then I shall believe you.”

“Mn.”

Oniisama gave me a reassuring smile, so I'll trust him for now.

But maybe Oniisama is tired from all the exam preparation.

His complexion seemed a bit pale.

As his cute little sister, would it be better if I made a midnight snack for him?

I've never done any cooking outside of home ec class at school though.

Well, I suppose things like this are more about the feelings of the cook. I'm sure Oniisama will be delighted.

And as for midnight snacks, they're generally onigiri or ramen?

No, no, that's too ill-matched with this family.

But something too heavy at night is, you know~?

Should I challenge myself to make zousui rice soup?



red snow crab zousui

Yeah, tomorrow I'll make sure to talk to our maid about it.

As you'd expect, I was still pretty scared, so I slept with the light on that night.

There weren't any strange sounds.

We go on excursions every May. This year we're going to an animal farm.

Before I left, Okaasama warned me to properly cover myself with and reapply sunscreen as she handed it over.

As for the farm, we're going to be experiencing things like milking cows, or riding a horse, or rafting.

When we arrived, it was a place filled with nature, and the air was clean and fresh!

I found myself taking in large breaths of it.

Occasionally there was the stink of poop though.

When it came to the milking, the sheltered Ojousamas were afraid of the cow's size, but I excitedly went first.

UOHHHH~ It's warm!

When I finished, they even said stuff like "Reika-sama is so daring and brave." and praised me. It's fun, you know?

There were also goats and sheep and rabbits, and was really peaceful.

I decided I was going to try out every bit of it.

R-, Rabbits are so cute. I wanna keep one!

The rabbits are tempting me with their round eyes, and I seriously wanna take them home with me.

While I fed the carefree goats with feed, I heard cheers from afar.

Wondering what was happening, I looked over to see the dashing figures of Kaburagi and Enjou on horseback.

Perhaps they had experience because both of them were bold and undaunted.

They truly looked like princes on white horses. (The horses weren't white though.)

The girls made a huge fuss.

It seemed like a number of other students had horseback experience as well, but unfortunately they were completely overshadowed.

“Kaburagi-sama, so dreamy...”

“Like a real prince.”

“Kyaa! Enjou-sama looked this way!”

There were even girls waving at them.

Of course they didn’t wave back though.

Even so, seeing these new sides of them, all the fan girls were in really good moods.

Even the normally poker-faced Kaburagi would occasionally talk to the horse with a smile.

To my great shame, even I felt my heart skip a beat when I saw that.

No good, no good. Animal Magic, how fearsome.

Because everybody spent the morning frolicking with the animals, when meat was brought out for lunch, everybody had difficult expressions.

The cold milk that we squeezed was yummy though.

After that, we spent the afternoon rafting and hiking, and thanks to moving about the whole day, everybody was fast asleep on the bus back.

Because of the spray from the river, my trademark curls are a little frazzled.

I can’t get up anymore...

I just pray that I don’t drool.

But still, that Kaburagi kid and Enjou sure looked cool on horseback.

I've also had some experience sitting on a horse as it was pulled along, but I'll bet riding by yourself like that is much more fun.

When I asked, I found out that Oniisama used to learn horseback riding as well.

Because he's in the kyudo club, apparently he also did horseback archery.

What the heck! I had no idea!

Even though I'd definitely love to see his gallant horseback archery!

As I was thinking how great it'd be if I could learn too, I tried asking Okaasama, but she said that it would be terrible if girls hurt themselves, and refused.

Hm~mm, what a shame.

I've even heard that horse riding was good for dieting.

CHAPTER 28

Lately in my science and social science cram classes, I've spotted this girl I've really got my eye on.

She's a tiny and docile looking girl, and she occasionally sits next to me you see, and so one day I spotted a certain keychain on her bag that I just couldn't take my eyes off of.

A "Tarow the Taro" plush toy keychain!

"Tarow the Taro" is just as you'd expect, a taro yuruchara mascot character.

He's a mascot created for a town that produces taros, but even if he's a yuruchara (relaxed/lenient character), what's really too yurui(relaxed/lenient) is the quality of his conception!

He looks exactly like a taro with eyes, a nose and a mouth stuck on. And what's more, his face is pathetic looking. His eyebrows slant downwards pitifully, after all.

Perhaps the person(mascot?) himself is painfully aware of how pathetic his looks and popularity are, because during yuruchara events, he always stays in a small corner to avoid getting in the way of the stars.

He's a complete extra.

And as for me, I actually really love this weird little yuruchara!

He kinda makes you wonder if they couldn't do a little more for him.

At festivals, he's overwhelmed by the star yurucharas, and has really little presence.

But because of the occasion, he wears a little tie to make himself a bit more presentable, and you're just left with this odd sense of melancholy.

The first time I saw him, I thought, *'Whoa, definitely not popular. He's so plain, and his*

face isn't even cute.' but after seeing him a few times I started feeling sorry for him, and before long I was starting to think that maybe his lazily created face was kind of cute too.

Even though he was a mascot character created to revitalise the town, he doesn't have any self-assertion at all.

'But that timidity and cowardliness, I totally get it too. I have a Tarow in me as well! If I don't cheer for him, who will!'

Or so I thought as maternal instincts started firing up inside me.

And that's who Tarow the Taro is. And a girl with his goods hanging from her bag is sitting right besides me.

I wanna be friends!

It's not often that you'd find a girl who likes such a plain and inconspicuous yuruchara.

I wanna talk to my heart's content about Tarow.

Or rather, I had no idea they even made Tarow merchandise!

But I haven't been able to find a good way of becoming friends with her.

If I suddenly went "Please become my friend." I'd seem way too suspicious.

How are you supposed to break the ice again?

At school, it's always people around me that approach me first, so I've never had to make the first move.

Uwah~ Just how useless am I.

Anyway, I'll just speak to her casually.

Right! Think back to Akizawa-kun's friendliness. First is the greeting...

But even if I had decided that I wanted to call out to her, Tiny-san didn't show any signs of looking my way at all.

It's like the mood is some kind of wall around her.

No, no, this is where you need courage!

“Umm, your bag...”

“Eh-!?”

The girl turned my way, looking at me tensely.

“Ah-, it was getting in your way, wasn’t it. Sorry, I’ll move it right now!”

“No, ummm...”

“I’m really sorry!”

She hastily moved the bag with the keychain to the other side of her desk, and distanced her body a little while she was at it.

Doesn’t she seem kinda, scared of me?

Could it be that I’m actually scary?

This time she really *has* created a total wall of rejection, so I couldn’t find the courage to speak to her anymore.

Ehhhh~!? Why!?

But I won’t give up.

Each time, I sat next to her again, or sometimes even closer, and I desperately tried to give off an ‘I’m not scary at all, you know~?’ aura, and whenever our eyes met I gave my best smile.

Maybe she noticed that I was totally staring at her, but she almost never looked at me herself.

Aren’t I like, totally the same as Stalker Kaburagi right now?

“Hmmm...”

I stared at myself in the mirror.

“Hmmmmmm...”

“Reika, what are you moaning about in front of the mirror for?”

While I was thinking by myself in the living room, Oniisama came along.
Perfect timing. I’ll try asking Oniisama.

“Oniisama, do I have a scary face?”

“Hah?”

My face isn’t *that* mean looking, right?

It’s true that I don’t think I have a particularly approachable face either.

Well, I think I look like I don’t have many openings.

Because of Okaasama’s taste, my hair is curled neatly, and everything I wear is brand-name clothing.

Since it’s all children’s wear, the moment I grow a little all this clothing will just go to waste, but well, as the young lady of the Kisshouin family, I don’t suppose wearing fast fashion would do.

Since I have so many clothes, maybe I’ve never worn the same thing to cram school before.

So it was that after all, huh?

My lack of openings might be the reason people are scared of me.

Or rather, is it because I have intensity?

It'd be nice if it wasn't because I have a mean-looking face, wouldn't it...

My eyes aren't sharp-looking, right?

"Who told you that you had a scary face?"

"No, nothing like that happened."

I looked at Oniisama's face.

Maybe Oniisama's inner-self projected from his face or something, because although it wasn't too sweet-looking, you could feel the kindness from it.

Whenever I talk to Oniisama, the corners of his mouth curve up a little, and I think that's part of why he feels so easy to get along with.

"So it's not just eyes. The mouth is important too."

I looked at the mirror and smiled.

Yeah. Suspicious-looking.

"I don't think your face is particularly scary. Although you standing here changing expressions in the mirror *is*. Anyway, why are you so worried all of a sudden?"

"...There is a girl I would like to get along with, but I get the feeling that she is frightened of me."

"Hmm~ Is this a girl from school?"

"No, a girl from cram school. I have been trying my best to appear friendly, but the more I try, the more frightened she becomes. I wonder why. Is it because my appearance truly is scary?"

“What kind of girl is she? Depending on what she’s like, your approach should change, right?”

What type?

“Docile, and somewhat ‘small’. But cute like a small animal.”

“Quite different from the girls normally around you, isn’t she. In that case, if you’re too assertive about it, it’s true that she might get scared, huh. How about thinking about if you were in her position?”

If I was in her position?

That girl isn’t plain, but she seems the docile type, so she probably wouldn’t be in the centre of her class.

I get the feeling that the old me would’ve gotten along with her without a problem.

I wasn’t docile, but I had friends like her around me.

In that case, could the old me have become friends with a girl like Kisshouin Reika...?

...No way, huh.

I mean, I doubt our conversation would mesh, and it’d probably get troublesome if an intense ojousama like Reika got angry at me.

Aahh, I guess it’s true that if I didn’t want to become friends with her but Reika continued to forcefully approach me, it would be kind of scary.

Just like how I’m afraid when Stalker Kaburagi approaches me to make me a spy, huh?

But I never went and ambushed her, did I~

“If I cut my hair and wore cheaper clothing, I wonder if she would be less vigilant.”

“I don’t think our parents would ever let you though.”

Yeah~

Okaasama wants me to act like an ojousama from a proper family.

I'm sure she has her own ideas of what I should be like.

But her taste... like this curled hair for example, her taste is pretty classical, huh?

Could it be that she really wants me to become like the Rococo Queen?

"Then whatever should I do?"

"Let's see. I guess there isn't any other way except diligently have her understand you, huh? Because you're an honest, and good girl."

Oniisama!!

"I understand! I shall do my best!"

"Yeah. You really are honest, aren't you."

For the first time in a while, Oniisama rubbed my head.

My mood is on the rise.

I'm impatient to talk to her about Tarow the Taro, but just like Oniisama said, it might be better if I slowly get closer to her.

I'll learn from Kaburagi's bad example, and try my very best!

CHAPTER 29

KISSHOVIN TAKATERU/MOMOZONO IMARI

Apparently my sister has begun dieting.

It looks like she's doing stretches in the living room.

She doesn't look particularly fat though, you know? Rather, isn't she a bit too skinny?

When I told her not to overdo things, she smiled happily at me.

Simple-minded as usual.

And I also know the truth about the weird yells coming from my sister's room.

I didn't hear what words she was actually saying, but I'm worried now that she's shouting strange things again.

"I can hear your shouts from outside your room, you know?" I casually told her, and in response she replied "Eh-, you heard me? Oh gosh, I need to be careful." in shock.

Yeah, I heard you, alright. And not just your yells. I heard your weird moans too, and it's scary.

I managed to solve another one of the problems caused by my sister's weird behaviour. I *am* technically taking my university exams this year, so I'd appreciate it if she behaved.

One day, my sister brought me some zousui rice soup in the name of a late-night snack. It hadn't been too long since dinner, so I honestly wasn't hungry at all.

It's not like I had been planning on studying all night, and I had planned to sleep an hour later.

So if I ate it, it would probably be bad for my body instead...

But my sister looked my way expectantly, wanting me to hurry and eat.

I'm troubled...

This pot is big enough for two people's worth, isn't it.

My sister's eyes were completely glittering.

Can't be helped...

Preparing myself for the worst, I opened the lid, and found a steaming egg zousui with spring onions spread about.

I scooped some into a bowl, and with a soup spoon, I brought some to my mouth.

...Salty.

You've put way too much salt, my little sister!

My tongue is tingling from it. I want some water, now.

Ah crap, there's no water.

All she gave me was hot tea. Hot food, and hot drinks. ...Little sister.

I hurriedly pulled out some cold water from a small fridge in my room and gulped it down.

Thank goodness for putting a refrigerator here.

I bought it in the past. It's so that if I want a drink, I don't have to risk heading outside and encountering some of my sister's weird behaviours.

"How was it, Oniisama?"

It was salty. You put in too much salt. Did you even taste-test this?

"...It was delicious."

When she looked at me with those round eyes, I couldn't tell the truth.

Honestly, how troubling. Rather than tasteless chocolate, the hurdle is higher for salty zousui.

I don't have the confidence to finish the stuff I ladled into the bowl.

But...

My sister simply believed me, and smiled happily.

Can't be helped...

I guess I'll try my best to at least finish the stuff in the bowl.

Without letting it show, I desperately ate. The 500ml bottle was gone in an instant.

I immediately opened another bottle.

As you'd expect, I couldn't finish the stuff left in the pot, so I apologised and told her that I wasn't so hungry at night.

Saying something like "Maybe I should have some too...", she took a spoon to her mouth.

"Hmm? I wonder if it's a little salty."

So you've noticed, little sister!?

But this isn't at the level where you'd call it 'a little', you know.

Even so, my sister continued eating with an unconcerned expression.

My sister's sense of taste is way too rough.

And what about her diet? Carbohydrates before bed are scarier than monsters, you know.

In the end, my sister finished all of the leftovers.

At this rate, I might have to continue to suffer this hell of supper attacks. What do I do.

"Reika, thanks for making me a snack tonight. But eating makes me sleepy, so you don't have to worry about it from now on. I won't be studying too late either."

"Is that so?"

“Yeah. I’m happy with just your feelings. And also, I might get fat eating before sleep, right?”

“Ah-, that is true!”

Looks like it had quite an effect on my dieting sister.

Thank goodness...

After seeing out my sister with the pot, my stomach was bloated from all the water, and I was exhausted.

I feel sick from all the water...

Maybe it might feel better if I just throw it up.

But she *did* try her very best making that, so I’d feel sorry for her if I went and did that. And so that night, I fought with my nausea until I somehow managed to digest it.

As for the tasteless, yearly Valentine’s Chocolates, I discussed it with Minadzuki-san, who I went to an amusement park with last year.

“My sister’s handmade chocolates are too flavourless, so I was wondering what I could do about it. I feel bad for her when she tries so hard to make them, so I’m sorry about this, but could I perhaps get you to casually teach her how to make them, Minadzuki-san?”

When I asked her this, although she asked “flavourless chocolates?” confusedly, she happily agreed, and some time later they made chocolates together at our home.

A few days later, the chocolates that my sister gave me were sweet like they were supposed to be.

Just what kind of magic did Minadzuki-san use, to make that girl's chocolates actually taste sweet.

When I asked her this she replied, "I don't know for sure what the reason was, but she heated the chocolate in water for too long, which dispersed it, and well, just a whole bunch of other mistakes. But it's fine now. Reika-san seems to know what to do, and what not to do in making chocolates now, so from next year the chocolates should be delicious as they should be."

I was relieved.

Should I get Minadzuki-san to help this time as well?

But my little sister really looks up to her. If she shows her mistakes in front of her adored senpai, she might get depressed.

For the sake of her future as well, perhaps I should casually recommend cooking classes to her.

In public, my sister does quite a good job in playing the ojousama.

Like somebody truly befitting the name of the Kisshouin family's daughter. My parents haven't noticed either that she's actually rather disappointing(pitiful) on the inside.

Anyhow, as time goes on, her mask comes off more and more when she's in front of me, and the stupidity and silliness on the inside is really starting to show.

She's probably just that trusting of me, but if she does something too weird it'll scare *me*, so I wish she would stop.

And little sister, don't try and do chin-ups inside your closet. It's scary.



My friend, Kisshouin Takateru, is a pretty splendid guy.

To begin with, he rarely gets angry.

I've almost never seen him get emotional, and he basically treats everybody politely.

In the archery club he's captain too, and all the underclassmen rely on him. His results are always in the high ranks, but he's never shown off about this.

He almost seems like a human with no flaws, but he's actually pretty black-hearted, and he uses his gentle-looking smile to get people to do what he wants.

At a glance he looks like a kind person who'll accept everyone, but the number of people he actually let's down his guard around are pretty few.

But at heart, he's a straight-forward guy. Somehow or other, he's just good at taking care of others. For people he considers friends, he definitely won't ever betray them. It's these parts of him that I like.

Anyhow, that Takateru has a little sister.

She's a cute girl, who looks like a well-made western doll.

When she's quiet, she looks just like one, but when she smiles her dimples come out, and it's cute.

Whenever I bring Imouto-chan a present, she always seems to smile happily from the bottom of her heart.

Unlike her brother, she doesn't have a hidden side to her.

Sometimes the three of us chat together, and she happily eats the sweets I bring her. I guess she likes sweets, huh.

A while back when I went with her to an amusement park, her eyes shot between this stall and that stall, and when I bought her sweets that I thought she would like, she was so grateful to me that it was shocking.

Just a few hundred Yen's worth of food is enough to get her eyes sparkling and saying "Thank you very much, Imari-sama!" so it made me want to tell her that I'd buy her any food she wanted.

It felt like feeding a bird chick.

Imouto-chan always happily listens to my stories about Takateru. She really loves him. I could totally feel her feelings towards her “beloved Oniisama”.

And as for Takateru, he totally dotes on her.

Takateru is a guy who hates people who stick to him without a sense of distance.

But apparently it's a different story when it comes to his own sister.

Imouto-chan is adorable. She really thinks that Takateru is a gentle, wonderful Oniisama.

She doesn't notice that he occasionally plays with her reactions. She just dances on his palms as much as he wants.

Apparently Takateru doesn't think of himself as a siscon, but from my eyes, he's plenty siscon enough.

When they're sitting on the couch in the living room, he always has her sit next to him. Never, ever next to me.

When he listens to her talk, it's not some statue's archaic smile, but an actual smile that he has.

When Imouto-chan gets her head patted by Takateru she smiles happily in response. These siblings really do get along.

All I have is a cocky little brother, so sometimes I get jealous of him when I wonder how things would be if I had a cute little sister attached to me too.

One day in the Pivoine salon, I heard Takateru discussing “handmade chocolates” with Aira-chan.

When I asked him about that, he told me “I asked her to teach my sister how to make handmade chocolates for Valentine's”.

Valentine's huh.

Apparently he gets handmade chocolates from Imouto-chan each year.

When I said “I wonder if this year I'll get some from Imouto-chan too~”, he just stared

blankly at me and asked back “Why does my sister have to give a Valentine’s chocolate to *you*?”.
Damn siscon...

Once when I thought about teasing this siscon and joked with a smile, “If Imouto-chan and I got married, you’d end up as my Oniichan as well, huh~ What should I do?”, I ended up eating a strong hook to the solar plexus.

...Sorry, I won’t say it again.

They’re a funny pair of siblings.

Rather, when Imouto-chan gets involved, Takateru immediately becomes funnier.

Today as well, I’m heading to the Kisshouin house with sweets in hand.

CHAPTER 30

Lately, things between Serika-chan and Kikuno-chan have become strained.

The cause was Kikuno-chan being in the same class as Kaburagi.

When we realised it after the class announcements, Kikuno-chan was dancing for joy.

Since then, every day, it's been talk about Kaburagi.

Stuff like "When he was reading the passage out during Japanese class, it was so dreamy." or "After Kaburagi-sama used the piece of chalk, I ended up using it too".

From my perspective it's just idle gossip, but apparently that wasn't the case with Serika-chan.

"Reika-sama, don't you think that Kikuno-san been getting ahead of herself lately? Just because she's in the same class as Kaburagi-sama, every single day she does nothing but boast about it. What on earth is with her!"

Oh my my~

Even though Serika-chan and Kikuno-chan are like a duo, now that one side's been stealing a march on the other, cracks are appearing in their relationship.

"Aren't you frustrated, Reika-sama? Kikuno-san is acting as though she's closer to Kaburagi-sama than you are! So arrogant!"

I'm not frustrated at all, but...?

I mean, I don't particularly like him after all.

Only, considering how many fans those two have in school, there's no reason for me to stir up trouble by admitting that. So thus far I've just been randomly following along with everybody and saying stuff like "How wonderful." when appropriate.

“She says things like how Enjou-sama occasionally comes to visit her class! And lately, that girl hasn’t even been spending lunch time with you, Reika-sama! She’s betraying us!”

Uwahh~ She’s getting all heated up.

I wonder what I should do.

“Perhaps Kikuno-san is merely doing so because she felt that you would be happy to hear such stories. I do not think that she means ill, you know?”

“...I can’t imagine that she doesn’t, but...”

Her expression clearly says that she doesn’t believe me. But well, I also think that Kikuno-chan was just happily bragging.

“After all, Kikuno-san seems to think dearly of you, Serika-san. A while back when she was ill and you waited with her in the infirmary, she told me that she was very grateful to you. She even said that when push comes to shove, you were the one that could be relied on, you know?”

“Eh-...”

This is half truth and half lie.

It’s true that she was grateful about Serika-chan accompanying her in the infirmary. As for the stuff about being reliable, I said “Serika-san is reliable, isn’t she.” and Kikuno-chan just replied “Yes”.

“Kikuno-san said...”

“I think that Kikuno-san is just ecstatic about joining the class of the one she admires.

I am sure that she will calm down, given just a little time. To begin with, Kaburagi-sama is more or less indifferent towards girls, after all. In the end, rather than the far-away Kaburagi-sama, it will be you that she values more.”

“That’s true...”

Oooh, she bit!

In that case...

“Serika-san, please take this.”

“Eh-, a macaron?”

I had given Serika-chan a pink macaron.

“It is a limited time cherry-flavoured macaron. Kaburagi-sama’s favourite.”

“EH-!? Kaburagi-sama’s!?”

“Yes. Earlier when I went to the Pivoine salon, Kaburagi-sama was eating them. I helped myself to one as well, but brought it here without eating it. You should eat it, Serika-san. Keep this a secret from Kikuno-san, all right?”

“Goodness...”

Serika-chan happily accepted the macaron with two hands.

“It isn’t often that you get to see Kaburagi-sama eating sweets, is it.”

“My. That is not the case at all. He has quite the sweet tooth, you know?”

He eats sweets in the salon a lot, and he was a sweet tooth in Kimidol as well.

For a while when he was in Kyoto, he was totally in love with this old tea shop's matcha chocolate after all.

I don't think he's hiding the fact or anything, but to begin with we aren't allowed to bring sweets to school, so the only chance of seeing him eating them is in the salon I guess.

Since Serika-chan is in a good mood again, I guess that's good enough for now.

"Umm... Reika-sama. What I said earlier..."

"Of course, I did not hear a thing. After all, it was not how you truly felt, was it."

"No. Thank you very much, Reika-sama."

No, no. You're welcome.

"Reika-sama, what do you think of Serika-san's attitude lately? She's jealous because I'm in the same class as Kaburagi-sama!"

This time Kikuno-chan timed it so that Serika-chan wasn't there, before coming to talk to me.

"If she's envious, then she should just say so. Even though I went out of my way to tell her stories about Kaburagi-sama, all she does is glare at me. Don't you think her personality is terrible?"

Oh my, oh my~

That's quite an arrogant attitude, huh~

I think both of you were in the wrong.

"Serika-san was sulking because all you spoke of was Kaburagi-sama."

"Sulking?"

"Please keep this a secret, but, Serika-san was complaining to me about how Kaburagi-sama is more important to you than she is. 'Even though I'm closer to her', she said. I think that she might be lonely."

"Eh-..."

"Serika-san likes you very much, after all. But lately all you speak of is Kaburagi-sama. Wouldn't you feel ignored? Don't you think that perhaps her jealousy is directed at Kaburagi-sama instead?"

Now *this* is a total lie.

"But you must not go to Serika-san to confirm this. Serika-san is quite the stubborn one, so if you knew how she really felt, she would likely sulk even more, you see."

"To think Serika-san said..."

"In this case... What if you act like the mature one, and take the first step? I am certain that if you do so, Serika-san will immediately feel better. She likes you a lot. The two of you are best friends, after all."

"Best friends... You're right. We're best friends, aren't we."

It looks like she's a little happy about the specialness of 'best friends'.
And it seems like her anger has subsided too.

"Reika-sama, what I said earlier..."

"Of course, I did not hear a thing. After all, it was not how you truly felt, was it."

"No. Thank you very much, Reika-sama."

No, no. You two are quite similar, you know.

After that, they immediately made up.

And it looks like my lies weren't exposed. The two of them are lovey-lovey and following each other everywhere again.

I'm a coward, so absolutely 'no thank you' to trouble. It's scary.

I mean, you never know when you'll get wrapped up in it, after all.

Peace is definitely the best.

Speaking of which, in 『you are my dolce』, didn't Kisshouin Reika feed Emperor with lies about the protagonist, that led to a falling out scene...?

CHAPTER 31

Yurukyara or yuru-chara are mascot characters of sorts, and like, different prefectures have their own mascots and stuff.

Also I've never been to Japan, nor seen how they sell these tourism yuru-charas, so this chapter's translation might have a few mistakes.

Even though it's already summer, I haven't made any progress with the girl at cram school.

But I know her name now. It's Yorino Aoi-chan.

As per usual, I stole a look at the name written on her books.

Aoi-chan. What a fitting name.

I kind of get the feeling that my stalker traits are getting stronger and stronger.

I don't think I can laugh at Kaburagi anymore...

But a chance suddenly appeared.

As usual, I was on stand-by next to Aoi-chan as I watched the situation.

And while I was doing so, Aoi-chan suddenly dropped her pen!

At the speed of light, I picked it up!

"Ah-..."

Having lost her pen, Aoi-chan looked at me in a panic.

It's my chance! My once-in-a-lifetime chance!

"Umm..."

“I-, I-, I am Kisshouin Reika! Gokigen’yoh!”

Aoi-chan’s hand reached towards the pen I was grasping and hesitating in mid-air, but it was a precious hostage. I wouldn’t hand it back so easily.

“Hmm...”

Aahh, she’s frightened of me.

Why? Is it because my eyes are shining like a predators? It is because of my drill hair?

Nooooo, I’m not scary, you know!?

An opening, look for an opening...

“I too like Tarow the Taro!”

“Eh-”

I decided on all or nothing.

To begin with, the reason I wanted to become friends with her is because I saw the unpopular yuru-chara on her bag.

“Ever since I saw your, um, Tarow the Taro keychain, I have always wanted to speak to you.”

Aahh, this kind of feels like a love confession.

My hands are shaking from the nervousness. My heart is pounding away.

“So, um, could you perhaps be my friend?”

“...”

Uwaih, I'm about to cry from the nervousness.

Oniisama, I meant to earnestly get closer to her, but I ended up jumping the gap in one go!

What do I dooo? Saveeee meeeeeeeeeee!

"...Um, my pen, please return it."

"....."

Aahh, it's over.

Aoi-chan is frowning just like Tarow is.

Of course she wouldn't want to be friends with a girl like me.

Of course. A fake Rococo would be the type that Aoi-chan is worst with, after all.

I'm just a drill hair girl.

I see, I see.

I'm sorry. I won't follow you around anymore. Drill hair girl will quietly leave...

I held out the pen to Aoi-chan.

Definitely, don't cry.

Oniisama, I've been rejected.

OTL...

"...Please take care of me."

After grasping the pen tightly, Aoi-chan had fallen into thought for a while, but then she raised her head to look at me before saying that.

Huh?

“I’m, Yorino Aoi.”

I know. Because I’m a stalker in the making.

“Please be my friend.”

After saying that, Aoi-chan smiled.

EHHEHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!?

“Really?”

“Mn.”

Eh-, why!? Even though you were that scared of me, why!?

“But, weren’t you avoiding me?”

When I said that, Aoi-chan looked a little awkward.

I asked something unnecessary.

“Because, you said that you liked this,”

she said, pointing at her Tarow strap,

“Nobody has said that they liked him before.”

“Same here!”

I've never actually asked around, but far from people telling me they like him, nobody has even mentioned him before. They probably don't even know about him.

"I also want to talk to you about Tarow."

"Mn!"

Did it! I did it!

Oniisama! I tried my best!

And it looks like Aoi-chan is willing to be my friend!

Class began so we stopped talking for a while, but the moment that it ended, we started talking again.

About how Aoi-chan's grandpa lives in the countryside, in the area that Tarow the Taro came from.

About how she bought her keychain last year when she went over there to play.

About how Tarow the Taro goods were only sold in his hometown.

"I see~ I also searched the internet, but nobody was selling Tarow goods anywhere, and I was really wondering where on earth you got your keychain, you know? I even thought that you perhaps made it yourself."

"Ahaha, he's not very famous so I don't think they'd sell him on the internet. There isn't much variety in his goods, and I don't think they sell very well."

"Truly?"

"Yeah. Where he comes from, they sell a Tarow pouch with a picture of him in it, and in shops they sometimes have cardboard printouts of him, but the time that I went

there, nobody was buying Tarow goods except me.”

“My~”

So Tarow really is a pitiful kid...

So like me, Aoi-chan also became fans of him because she felt sorry for him.

Can Tarow not get any fans outside of sympathy votes?

“Looking carefully, he’s got quite an interesting face, huh~ At a glance he looks plain though~”

“Mn...”

He’s mostly a light brown, so he really is quite plain.

After that, we continued happily talking until second period began.

It was really fun.

We promised to sit next to each other next week too. I’m so happy.

When I got home, I immediately let Oniisama know.

“I did it, Oniisama. I became friends with Aoi-chan!”

“Aoi-chan? The girl that you said you wanted to become friends with, last time?”

“Yes. Today we had a good time chatting about Tarow.”

“Aahh, the... weird little yuru-chara that you like...”

The other day I showed Oniisama Tarow the Taro on the internet.

Oniisama wasn't sure what to say about him that time as well.

“Oniisama, you still haven't understood Tarow's charm yettt?”

“Looks like it. I don't think it'll ever happen.”

“Ehhhhh?”

Oniisama, why won't you understand its cuteness.

But Oniisama gave me advice about Aoi-chan didn't he.

As thanks, should I try making him dinner again?

Oniisama, look forward to it!

Aahh, what a good day it's been!

CHAPTER 32

It's autumn again, and the athletics meet came around once more.

Now that we're the seniors in primary school, it's become our turn to act as the executive committee.

And for some reason I was nominated as the female executive from our class.

I'm not particularly good at sports, and my planning ability and dynamism isn't anything to write home about either, so why me? Or so I was wondering at first, but apparently the teacher secretly decided that it would be better to have somebody with enough authority to handle the underclassmen smoothly.

Honestly speaking, it's a damn hassle...

We're still primary schoolers so it's not like the executive committee actually does anything important.

Just stuff like collecting the participation lists from each class, or doing odd jobs for the teachers, or well, small stuff like that.

And also, on the day of the athletics carnival, we're supposed to stand in our tent and make sure everything comes along.

The executives from 5th and 6th grades gathered before the real preparations for the athletics carnival, and we introduced ourselves.

Amongst these people, I spotted Enjou Shuusuke.

The girls here were all excited about it. Apparently they hadn't expected that Enjou would be an executive committee member. I didn't either.

I looked at everybody else too, but concluded that Enjou was probably chosen for the same reason as me.

The two of us are the only Pivoine members.

But unlike me, I would have thought that Enjou would have been able to refuse.

Maybe he's a surprisingly cooperative guy.

Speaking of which, in Kimidol, Enjou was like the mediator between Emperor and everybody else, wasn't he.

After the introductions and the explanation of our duties, we were about to begin our work when a problem occurred.

The girls were swarming about Enjou and didn't look like they were going to do anything.

Enjou himself was doing stuff like printing out the printouts or organising the numbers, and properly doing what he was supposed to, but the girls around him were just talking to him and not working at all.

Even when the boys in the committee gave them a warning, they would declare "I'm helping Enjou-sama!" and far from doing work, would actually look down on the boys by saying "Are you sure you aren't just jealous because you boys aren't popular~?" and so the boys couldn't say anything more.

Enjou warned them as well, and they did start to work, but the moment they left his side, their hands would completely stop.

This was a total mistake in personnel selection...

While all this was happening, I was quietly sitting away from the trouble and folding the programmes.

Thanks to the Enjou Harem, I'm missing a lot of help and it's terrible.

These programmes were ordered from elsewhere, but for some reason the task of folding them in two was left to the executive committee.

If you're going to order them from some shop, can't you just have them finish the job? I don't really get it.

The paper was stealing the moisture from my hands, and I had trouble picking up one at a time.

This is hard... It'd be great if there was a thimble but...

Looking around, I couldn't find one, but I did find a rubber band instead.

I wrapped it around my thumb.

Then I tried picking up a page.

Oooh! It's easier!

Here we go, here we go.

Take and fold, take and fold. Like a machine, I continued to repeat this. Like I was possessed by a mother working a side-job from home, I worked single-mindedly.

Boys walking past exclaimed "Eh-, rubber band!?" beneath their breaths, but I won't pay any mind. Like a worn-out housewife, I prioritised efficiency.

The happy voices of the harem were audible from where I was. Work, damn you.

Even after that, the girls of the committee continued to orbit Enjou, and basically did no work at all.

Apparently the boys in the committee had long given up on trying to make them.

And as time went on, more and more odd jobs got pushed my way.

From the next day onwards, I provided thimbles. I was also equipped with odourless muscle ointment for sore shoulders.

I'm completely used to clerical work now.

Using the copy machine has become my specialty. I'm good with shrinking, magnifying, and double-sided copying too.

The Year 6 boys all praised me and said "As expected of Kisshouin-san" and pushed more odd jobs onto me.

Do you really think I'll be fooled with such obvious flattery?

But I couldn't refuse, so from copying to printing to stapling, just everything, everything, everything got pushed onto me.

Hm? That's weird.

I'm part of the elite Pivoine, and I'm supposed to be in the top caste amongst the girls, but before I knew it, I became the number one gopher.

Could it be that Side-Job Reika has gotten too powerful due to her talent?

I actually get the feeling that I'm doing every single job that was assigned to the Enjou Harem.

Dammmiiiitt! Work, you lot!

At one point, we realised that one of the underclassman classes had an overlap in their event selections, so I ended up heading there to warn them directly.

It was for times like this that Enjou and I were meant to use our authority as Pivoine members, but if Enjou moved then his harem would move, and we didn't need a whole damn court procession so I went by myself.

The Year 3 class in question was having a break, so the boys in particular wouldn't listen to what I was saying.

Because of the stress from the committee lately, I was starting to really sulk in my heart.

'You lot, do you know who I am!? I'm Kisshouin Reika-sama!! The one and only!!' I screamed in my heart.

I didn't have the courage to actually say it aloud.

Dammmiittttt! Every last one of them is...!

Thankfully the girls properly listened to me, and tried to help me out, but a number of the boys just wouldn't listen.

Or rather, isn't that kid the one that had the overlaps!? Listen, damn you!

"As I said, you cannot participate in both of these events. Choose one, and let other students have a go at the other."

“Ehhhhhhhh, but then we’re not gunna win!”

Like I care, retard.

“At any rate, you cannot participate in both. This event will begin immediately after the other, and you will not make it in time.”

“Then I’ll run.”

“That is not the problem here.”

What’s with this idiot? Is he really a student at Suiran?

He brings to mind the boys from the public school in my old life.

“Hey, listen to what Reika-sama says!”

“Hah? Who?”

What did you say?

Don’t think I won’t punish you!

Before long, the girls and boys ignored me and started arguing by themselves.

Aah, it’s beyond my control now.

“Okay, enough.”

Enjou clapped his hands together as he entered the class.

“Katsuragi, could you perhaps cause a little less trouble for Reika-san? Just hurry up and fix your event entries already.”

Apparently the naughty kid was acquainted with Enjou, and immediately turned obedient.

Even the noisy class instantly began to behave, and the girls were entranced by Enjou's show of leadership.

Dammnnnnn ittttt, is this the difference between a leader and a faker!?

With Enjou's arrival, the problems were resolved in an instant, and the two of us returned to the committee room.

"Reika-san, if you were going to go, you could have told me too."

"It seemed busy around you, so I supposed that you were busy."

I made sure to prick at him.

"Ahh, *that* huh? I'm troubled about it too. It looks like quite a bit's been left to you. I'll help out too."

You're going to come along with useless extras, so no thank you.

"I will be fine. Please do your own work, Enjou-sama."

"I see."

When we got back, the women of the harem swarmed around their lord.

"Enjou-sama, we wanted to go too."

"We completed the work that you left us, Enjou-sama!"

I reported the corrections that the senpais made, and then gathering up the remaining documents, I headed to the staff room.

Aahh, I need soothing...

CHAPTER 33

On the day of the Athletics Meet, I went around with the teachers greeting the guests, so things were busy from the very start.

I get the feeling that the teachers completely used my name as a proud Pivoine and Kisshouin clan member.

And I think it was the same for Enjou who was standing next to me.

Immediately after that, I returned to the executive tent to be stationed as the person in charge of announcements.

I had thought that people in the broadcasting committee would be doing this, but they're in charge of the music for the event, and don't have a mic.

The role of announcer is passed to whoever isn't participating in a current event. People who aren't good at the more ostentatious roles take a role in the background. Of course, I wanted to work behind the scenes as well. I've got stage fright, so when I was doing announcements my voice was totally trembling.

After checking that there wasn't any misprint in the programmes and manuscript, I handed it over to an announcer.

Besides that, I also did the boring job of moving the point flags for the relays.

It looks like I'll get a lot of use out of the sunscreen that Okaasama plastered me with.

I carried out the odd jobs that the teachers assigned me, and then returned to the tent to finally have a breather.

While drinking cold tea, I watched the obstacle relay in a daze.

As you'd expect, they don't have bread eating competitions in this school, huh~ Even though I would've totally gone if they had anpan.

"You've done a great job, Kisshouin-san."

A teacher called out to me.

“You think so? Thank you very much.”

“You’ve been working all morning, right? In the afternoon, leave it to others, and rest a little. Which events are you participating in?”

“The borrowing race.”

I thought that it was a pretty safe game to enter, since it was more reliant on luck than physical ability.

Also I entered the dance, and the foot race, and the ball toss.

I’m sure not looking forward to the race~ At least let me get into the top three somehow.

It was time for the borrowing race now, so I returned to my class.

It’d be great if I didn’t get some weird item. Just glasses or something would be good.

Just to be safe, I looked over the guests to see who had what items.

At the very least, I don’t want to show something shameful like panic.

The other kids who were entering said things like “Let’s do our best, okay?” to cheer each other up.

Uuu, my heart is pounding.

The borrowing race began, and the participants all ran this way and that to look for their items and people after drawing their cards.

Please let me draw something simple!

My turn came up, and what I drew was ‘a fast-running friend’.

Who the heck is that?

Faster than my head could turn, my body ended up moving.

There's only one friend I know that runs fast.

"Akizawa-kun! Come with me!"

I pulled on the arm of the surprised Akizawa-kun and aimed for the goal.

Although he didn't seem to know what was going on, he ran with me.

The boys who had been with Akizawa-kun were making a fuss. Don't misunderstand, damnit.

When I reached the goal and handed the paper over to the attendants, they read it aloud.

As I recall, Akizawa-kun was in the baton relays.

It looks like I somehow managed to contribute to my class.

"A fast-running friend, huh~? I sure was surprised."

"Mn, sorry about that."

He was the only one I could think of! If it was 'fast-running person' and not 'fast-running friend', then I might have found a number of people though.

"Everyone might get angry at me for helping another class."

As he said that, Akizawa-kun smiled.

I might have gotten him wrapped up in something troublesome. I'm reflecting.

“If anybody says anything like that, please do tell me. I shall deal with it.”

“It’s fine, it’s fine.”

After that, while I was standing at the goal, somebody came to get *me*.

A boy from some other class pulled me and had me run. I’m the item?

We ran to the drawing spot once, and then back to the goal.

What they announced when we reached there was “a girl with a ribbon in their hair”.

Thank goodness.

It wasn’t “a girl with drill hair”.

Because many of the slips this time had things related to people, there weren’t any particular rumours about Akizawa-kun.

I was wondering if I had made trouble for him, so I was relieved to hear that.

Incidentally, a slip that read ‘person you like’ appeared, and a girl was reckless enough to call out to Kaburagi, resulting in a splendid rejection.

Don’t try the impossible.

In the afternoon was more work in the tent.

Now that I had the knack of it, it was easier than in the morning.

Right now I was sitting on a metal folding chair, and watching the events.

Besides the baton relays, there was also the main event of the Athletics Meet; the cavalry battle with the Year 5 and 6 boys.

The classes were broken into two teams, and would snatch at each other’s headbands.

Boys from my class also formed horseback units and participated, but people said there was a favourite team this year.

Kaburagi’s.

Naturally he was the rider.

There's no way that guy would be a horse.

Kikuno-chan who shared a class with him had told us excitedly, "With this, the cavalry battle will be our class' win!".

Even though he would probably just fall off right away and get laughed at.

I was a fool for thinking that.

The moment the start signal rang, Kaburagi freely moved about on his horse, and snatched headband after headband.

There were units that resolutely faced him down, but they would be rammed, have their arms twisted by Kaburagi, and sent tumbling from their horse free of their headbands.

Honestly, it was just too huge a difference in power.

I bet you lot practised heaps, to play Kaburagi's horse so perfectly.

From their point of view, they'd make heaps of enemies if they let Kaburagi fall, so I'll bet they practised like their lives depended on it.

For those units that ran away scared, the Kaburagi Unit would hunt them down from behind.

It was like the hunt of a carnivore.

I'll bet they were scared.

Before long at all, the units from my class were done. No, no, I think you guys put up a pretty brave fight.

"Aa~ah, Masaya has no mercy at all, does he."

Enjou smiled wryly from his seat behind me.

Yeah, absolutely no mercy at all.

In the end, only the Kaburagi Unit was left, and they seized a complete victory.

Later on, somebody would compare his gallantry in this battle to the legendary Napoleon, and eventually that turned into an Emperor.

It was the start that would cause Kaburagi to gain his famous nickname.

CHAPTER 34

Ever since people started calling him Emperor, Kaburagi's popularity rose again. Because of his achievements during the cavalry battle, it seems that his adherents amongst the boys have gone up. Particularly amongst the underclassmen. Amongst all the clamour, apparently the boys who served as The Emperor's Horse were boasting about doing so.

I can't say I understand how they feel, but as long as the people themselves are happy, then it's fine I guess.

Emperor's fame wasn't contained to the primary school section either. Apparently the stories went as far as the middle school, and I got a mail from Aira-sama reading 'Apparently Masaya is being called 'Emperor' now, isn't he.'

When particularly excited kids called him 'Emperor' to his face though, he would look at them with an icy gaze. So in the end, everybody had a tacit agreement that 'Emperor' would just be an informal nickname, and would never be used in front of him.

I think Emperor made the right choice. If he got on board with it like 'I am the Emperor!' then it would definitely turn into dark history and the source of future cringing.

Just to be safe, I mailed Aira-sama with 'It appears that the person himself has not authorised the nickname, so please take care.'

But man, to think that the nickname 'Emperor' actually came from Napoleon.

As the fake Rococo Queen, he really has terrible compatibility with me.

In 『you are my dolce』 he had always been called Emperor like it was natural, so I never really paid it much mind. I thought for sure that it was because he ruled over the school like a monarch.

But to think that it was an old nickname from primary school.

And what's more, the reason it came about was a children's cavalry battle... If it got explained to you once he was already an adult, wouldn't it sound pretty stupid?

Upfffpftt-!

Incidentally, I should note that my Drill Hair nickname is completely unauthorised. Rather than a nickname, that's more like an insult after all.

Anyhow, unrelated to my personal opinions on it, the girls around me were completely in love with the 'Emperor' nickname.

"Isn't it truly a fitting nickname for Kaburagi-sama?"

"To our class, he was like a conquering hero from the legends~"

"He was so cool during the cavalry battle~"

"Hahh~ Emperor is so dreamy..."

A refreshing breeze blew in from the window. Autumn really is the most relaxing season~

With my tummy also filled with food from lunch, I'm starting to feel sleepy.

"Don't you think so too, Reika-sama?"

"Eh-?"

Think what? Er, I wasn't listening at all.

"Reika-sama, you also think that Emperor is cool, don't you?"

"Y-, Yes, well, yes."

Can't go against the majority.

"I knew it~"

All the girls around me nodded in agreement.

All of them like the same people, after all.

"I think Reika-sama would be well-matched with Emperor."

Hah?

"Right. It's frustrating, but if it was Reika-sama, I could accept it."

"If some normal girl was paired with Emperor I definitely wouldn't allow it, but Reika-sama has both the pedigree and refinement worthy of him."

"But I still don't want Kaburagi-sama to belong to anybody yet~"

"If it's Reika-sama, I'll definitely cheer for her."

"Right. Reika-sama, try your best!"

...Hang on there. What's with this sudden development?

To begin with, Kaburagi has Yurie-sama. Although it's completely one-sided on his part...

"Everyone, are you not misunderstanding something?"

"My, what would that be?"

“I do not particularly desire to date Kaburagi-sama or anything as amazing as that. In the end, these are simply feelings of admiration. I would never dream of such a thing.”

Seriously, please stop with this!

It's a matter of life and death for me, okay!?

“But, don't you like Emperor too?”

“It is admiration. Simple admiration. Something quite different from love.”

The girls tilted their heads in confusion.

“Then, Enjou-sama? You were together in the executive committee, weren't you?”

“My, so Reika-sama was actually in Team Enjou-sama. Oh my, you're my rival then. But he really is so gentle and dreamy, isn't he~ The other day when we bumped into each other, he asked me if I was okay and then smiled at me!”

“Hey, are you sure you didn't bump into him on purpose?”

“I didn't~!”

Sorry for breaking it to you while you're all happy and stuff, but that's also a misunderstanding!

“I do not hold any special feelings towards Enjou-sama. Although, naturally I admire him as you all do.”

“My, is that the case?”

“That is so.”

Need to say it clearly here.

“Then, just who on earth do you like, Reika-sama?”

“Eh- ...nobody in particular.”

“Reika-sama, you don’t like anybody?”

“Well, no.”

“Nobody at all?”

“I do not think so, no.”

“Never ever?”

“Thus far, I do not suppose there has not been anybody like that, no.”

Yeah, my first love is still to come.

Everybody’s eyes turned pitying.

“So Reika-sama was actually still a child...”

GAAHHH...!! OTL

I got called a child by a child!

What is this silent damage that I’m taking...?

I mean, there haven't been any princes on white horses yet, so it can't be helped, right!?

My ideal is a calm, dreamy, gentle person who'll laugh and forgive my selfishness.

Overbearing types like Emperor from the manga are great for screaming 'Kyaaa! Emperor, so dreamy~~' when it's just a manga, but in real life he just causes you trouble.

I mean, come on. Barging in uninvited to the house of the girl you like? Who on earth does that. You just cause huge trouble for their family, or the neighbourhood, you know.

And confessing in the middle of a crowded road? Mannn, no way, no way.

Being forgiven for everything you do because you're a hot guy? That's only the case in manga. At least in my opinion.

And so, in that sense, a logical and gentle person is best, hey?

Where can I find my ideal man, I wonder~

Huh?

Isn't he sitting at my house studying for his exams?

What do I do. Could it be that I really *am* a brocon...?

Later after school, I, Reika the child, was called to the staff room.

"Kisshouin-san, could you join the executive committee for the Learning Presentation?"

"I decline."

That thing is even harder than the Athletics Meet. Just who on earth would say yes.

I've retired from being an odd jobs master.

Even if you flatter or soothe me, I'm definitely refusing.

The tears of an old guy won't move my heart at all.

Ever since my experiences during the Athletics Meet, I gained the courage to refuse.

CHAPTER 35

Winter came, and Oniisama entered the home stretch of his exam prep.

The department that Oniisama wanted to enter only admitted a small number of students and was strict with its selection, so he probably had it tough.

But he never displayed anything less than composure. As expected of Oniisama.

I wondered if I could do anything to help him, so I decided on the late-night snack after all, but the maid said that it would disrupt his rhythm and stopped me. She persuaded me that it was best just to pray in my heart for him.

Praying, huhh. Mm~mm, should I do the thing where you walk back and forth a hundred times while praying in front of a shrine?

When I went to Japanese and Maths cram classes as usual, Akizawa-kun who was supposed to be next to me was absent, and instead it was just Fukioka-san by her lonesome.

Hm? I wonder what's going on.

As I wondered that, Fukioka-san noticed my presence and gave a small bow. And so I returned the bow, and walked over to her.

“Gokigen’yoh, Fukioka-san. Is Akizawa-kun not with you today?”

“Gokigen’yoh. Takumi is down with a cold today. He even had a fever, so he’s bedridden at the moment. He should have been absent from school as well. Did you not know?”

“Akizawa-kun and I are in different classes, and so I did not know about his absence. But a cold, is it? Just when did he catch it?”

“It began the day before yesterday. After that, apparently it got worse and worse. It

doesn't seem to be influenza though. Ah-, if you'd like, please sit down."

Saying that, Fukioka-san invited me to sit by her side, so I decided to take up the offer. I wonder if I can stay here for the duration of class too.

"Even though it is so very close to winter break, Akizawa-kun caught the cold. What dreadful luck. A number of my classmates are absent due to the cold and influenza as well."

"My class is the same."

After that, we chatted lightly about our own classes, before Fukioka-san fell into silence. And then,

"...Um, I'm sorry."

"Eh-"

About what?

"Umm, what might this be about?"

"...I didn't want Takumi to be taken away from me, so I was malicious with you. Even at cram school, you had always been next to him, but I took that seat from you and made you sit by yourself, right? Even though Takumi told you to sit with us, because I looked unhappy..."

Aahh, that?

"That is nothing to worry about."

I'm saying that for real.

At first I felt a little lonely, but I started going to the convenience store, so I immediately got used to it.

Fundamentally, I've always been a person who never really stays angry about anything. I was like this in my past life too. Except when it comes to food.

Speaking about it in reverse, when it comes to food, my wrath is terrifying.

And well, I wasn't angry with Fukioka-san to begin with. I just thought she was a little scary, that's all.

"Takumi explained that you were just a friend from cram school, but once I thought about how you knew Takumi in a school that I knew nothing about... I'm sorry. Today without Takumi, I felt incredibly forlorn. And I realised that you must have felt the same way all this time."

No, I didn't really feel forlorn or anything though...

"Please do not mind it, truly. As a rule, I am generally quite fine with being alone."

"You're strong, aren't you, Kisshouin-san."

Fukioka-san looked at me with eyes of respect.

When a Japanese-style beauty looks at you like that, it's kind of embarrassing.

"You know, I was very worried about whether or not Takumi liked you, Kisshouin-san. No, rather, even now, I still worry. I mean, you're so cute."

Eh-, me, cute!?

Oh geez~ I don't think that's true at all though. Ehehe.

“I do not think something like that would ever happen though.”

“...You think so?”

“I do. I too have never thought of Akizawa-kun as more than a friend, after all.”

But he is a really good person. And he’s kind too.

But he’s not really the type that gets my heart pumping, hey?

Thinking about it, he’s actually pretty close to my ideal, so I wonder why. I’m sure it’s the difference between ideals and reality huh?

“You truly, won’t come to like him?”

“No.”

She smiled in relief.

Such a worrywart. What’s the saying again? No husband so desirable as his wife is jealous? Basically, women tend to think of their men as much more popular than they actually are, huh?

Ah, no, it’s not like I’m saying Akizawa-kun isn’t popular, okay?

He’s got a cute face like a squirrel after all.

“At school, are there any other girls that Takumi is close to?”

“I wonder. We have never shared a class together, after all. Occasionally when I spot him in the hallways, only boys surround him. Neither have I heard any rumours about him, or any word of girls who have fallen for him, you see~”

“I see...”

Relieved huh? Thank goodness, thank goodness.

“To begin with, our school has a preeminently popular duo, after all. The other boys get very little attention.”

“Ah-, I’ve heard about that from Takumi. And I hear rumours of them at my school as well. Apparently they’re incredibly cool.”

“...Yes.”

Rumours about them even in other schools? That’s amazing.

Fukioka-san’s Yurinomiya Girls Academy is a Catholic style school so it’s a little different from Suiran, but it’s famous as an ojou-sama school. The rumours might have spread through the network of high class girls. They’re all ‘gokigen’yoh’ comrades, after all.

“Could it be that you like one of the two, Kisshouin-san?”

Fukioka-san asked me with an excited expression.

Maidens in love all apparently have great interest in the love stories of others.

“I do not feel anything like that in particular. I have nobody like that.”

And then she looked a little bored and let-down.

Sorry for failing to meet expectations.

But still, don’t think that everybody is just like you, and it’s somehow natural that they have somebody they like.

“Even though you’re going to a co-ed school...”

“Hm~mm.”

Even if I’m going to a co-ed, people unrelated to this stuff just aren’t related.

Like me, in my old life.

Ah-, tears are...

“Huhu, somehow you’re quite different from my first impression, Kisshouin-san.”

“Really?”

“Mn. When I met you at the recital, you had a more unapproachable atmosphere. Like the very model of a Suiran ojousama. ‘Takumi is definitely going to get taken from me!’ I panicked.”

“Unapproachable... So it truly is because of my hairstyle?”

“Rather than your hairstyle, it’s more like the atmosphere that you exude all around, perhaps. There are girls like you in Yurinomiya as well. But once I tried talking to you, you were completely different. I think I understand why Takumi became friends with you. ...Um, would you become my friend as well?”

Eh-! Suddenly, ‘Friend GET’!?

Whoa, but still, I bet more than half of the reason is that you want to use me as an information source, right?

Even though I should’ve already retired from being a spy~

“Umm... I truly am in a different class from Akizawa-kun, so I really do not know how he is at school, you know?”

“Ah-, you think I’m trying to use you, Kisshouin-san? That’s not what this is. I just

wanted to talk to you more. And well, if you did tell me stuff, I would be happy though. Huhu.”

“Really?”

“Yes.”

In that case, I guess being friends would be fine too.
I’d find it more fun as well, being friends rather than ignored.

“Then, let us become friends.”

“Really? Yay!”

Seeing her smile as she clapped her hands before her chest, I really did think that this was the type of Japanese beauty that you’d want to protect. She’s cute. I want to learn from her.

After that, we chatted about our schools or Akizawa-kun and the like.

She and Akizawa-kun were neighbours, so their parents were close as well, and apparently they had been together since before they could remember. Akizawa-kun would always pull her hand and take her out to play, and she first started liking him in kindergarten.

But apparently Akizawa-kun wouldn’t notice her feelings at all. “Akizawa-kun is really thickheaded,” she said. Yeah, I thought that too.

But that thickheadedness is seriously on the straight path to your standard childhood friend route, huh~

Fukioka-san didn’t want to be separated from her beloved Akizawa-kun and wanted to go to Suiran as well, but because her Okaasama was an alumni of Yurinomiya she

had to go there and so she bawled in front of Akizawa-kun.

And also, even though Yurinomiya is a Catholic-style school, Fukioka-san's family has always been buddhist, so apparently she feels like a reverse-hidden Christian.

Apparently when she first enrolled, her heart was pounding all the time from the fear of being exposed and tried as a witch.

She's a totally different type to Aoi-chan, but I managed to make a new friend.

CHAPTER 36

Oniisama safely made it into his department of choice.

And so because of that, in order to celebrate with a banggg, I think I'll open the lid to my safe!

"Oniisama! I shall get you a present to celebrate your pass! What do you want?"

At first I thought about making it a surprise, but I couldn't come up with any good ideas?

'Would a watch be good?' or so I thought, but a watch worthy of the heir of the Kisshouin family wouldn't be within my meagre power to buy, so I had to give up on it.

Well, if I used all of the money, I might have gotten somewhere but...

Even if I thought about this and that, I couldn't think of any wonderful ideas, so in the end I decided that I could only ask the person himself.

Now come, Oniisama! I didn't use my new years money, so I've got quite a bit, you know! Don't be shy!

It's my savings for my future, but it's a celebration for none other than my Oniisama so of course I shall use it!

"I have been saving up in my piggy bank. So please tell me what you want!"

"Eh-! We're using *your* money!?"

So far shopping for Christmas presents or birthday presents has been done with Okaasama, so I've always used the Kisshouin family card instead of my own money. And apparently Oniisama didn't know about me saving money.

He was shocked when he heard the amount. I really do have that much money though.

“Let’s see. I think just your feelings would be plenty, but...”

“That will not do. I want to wish you congratulations, no matter what.”

Even though Oniisama has been trying so hard, I haven’t given him a thing.

I persuaded the hesitant Oniisama, and what he ended up choosing was a high class ballpoint pen from the familiar white star makers.

I didn’t expect to spend this little.

But it’s true that we already have a number of fountain pens and ballpoint pens from this place.

“I like how easy the pens from this place write. Since you went and got me it, I think I’ll use the pen you get me at university.”

Oohh! That would be great!

If Oniisama uses my present every day, I’d be really happy too.

Now that it’s come to this, let’s hurry up and buy it!

I went with Oniisama to the store, and after having him try a bunch of them, I bought him one that he liked.

Oniisama was really happy. Him being happy makes me super happy too.

And after that I had Italian for lunch with Oniisama!

Oniisama has been busy all this time with studying, and then after that he got his driver’s license and went out with friends, so he hasn’t really had time for me, which is why I was so happy today.

“What will you be having, Reika?”

“Let me see~”

I wracked my brains as I looked at the menu. Oh, ravioli. That would be really yummy, huh~?

After having decided on our orders, I was happily chatting with Oniisama when,

“Excuse me. Might you be Kisshouin-sama’s two children?”

A woman called out to us.

“——!!”

“Why if it isn’t Kaburagi-sama. It has been a while. This girl is my sister, Reika.”

Oniisama stood up to greet her, so I did the same in a panic.

I-, IT’S KABURAGI’S MUMMMMMMM!

Kaburagi’s mum was a neat beauty, and I’ve met her once or twice at parties before. Although both those times I basically only greeted her.

“Yes, I remember of course. Reika-san, it’s been a while, hasn’t it. You’ve gotten taller since the last time we met.”

Kaburagi-Mother smiled at me, but all I could do was return a cramped courtesy smile. It’s fine even if you don’t remember someone like me. Rather, please forget me all your life.

After chatting about a few things with Oniisama, Kaburagi-Mother started with

“Speaking of which,” before looking at me.

“Reika-san, you’re in the same grade as my son Masaya, aren’t you? Are you close with him?”

GEHHHH!

“No, unfortunately Masaya-sama and I are in different classes, and so we do not have very many chances to interact.”

And I intend to keep it that way.

“My, is that so? Then by all means come over to play. That Masaya only ever brings Shuusuke-kun over, you know. It would be wonderful if a girl came over. The place would brighten up.”

DEEEEEEEEEEEFINITELY NOTTTTTTTTTT!”

And if you want a girl, there’s Yurie-sama isn’t there! Yurie-sama has been coming over since she was little hasn’t she!

Absolutely no! ABSOLUTELY NO!

Unaffected by my inner panic, Kaburagi-Mother gave a beautiful smile before excusing herself.

Oh my god...

The fun atmosphere from earlier has been totally blown away, and Oniisama looked curiously at the dazed me.

“What’s wrong? You seem kind of off.”

“...No, I am simply shocked by Kaburagi-sama’s sudden appearance.”

Kaburagi-Mother remembered my name. She remembered I existed.

Just that much is fine, but to a coward like me, just being related at all to Kaburagi is scary.

That mum of his appeared a few times in the manga after all...

Ah-, that’s right!

“Oniisama, you will be telling Okaasama and Otousama about how we met with Kaburagi-sama today, correct?”

“Yeah I guess.”

“When you do, please do not tell them about how she invited me over to play. Because that was just being polite! If they mistake her for being serious I shall be terribly troubled!”

“...You don’t want to go over to the Kaburagi house?”

Of course I don’t want to go!

“Well, if that’s all, then sure I won’t say anything. Do you hate Masaya-kun? Did he do something to you?”

“No, nothing of the sort! Only, Otousama and Okaasama are expecting me to become close to him, and earlier they had a weird misunderstanding too. So because of that, I am a little...”

“I see. It’s too early for you, huh?”

Oniisamaaaaa. You're my last ray of hope, you know.

The dish that got brought in later should have been my beloved Italian, but because of the shock I couldn't really tell how it tasted.

Later when we got home, I just flopped onto my bed and remembered Kaburagi-Mother in 『you are my dolce』 .

As I recall, she supported Kaburagi-Father in his job, and was a talented person.

There was also an episode about how she was a powerful mum, and ever since Kaburagi was young, whenever he went and played a prank she would punish him mercilessly.

The fact that she has a gorgeous face and an intense glare is just like Kaburagi. I guess he takes after his mother.

Wait-, who cares about that right now.

She disapproved when the heir as well as her cute, only son, Emperor, began dating a commoner girl, and chided him a number of times too.

Pushed by the lies and cajolery of Kisshouin Reika's parents, she held an engagement party for her son and Reika, but then she was touched by her son's resolve and dedication to the protagonist, and blessed the two of them.

Without caring about Reika and her family falling beyond repair...

Uwahh... I *definitely* don't wanna get involved.

CHAPTER 37

Oniisama graduated from high school and entered university, while I entered Year 6. Once I considered that I wouldn't see Oniisama in uniform anymore, I felt a little lonely, so I took a few photos of him.

The Suiran high school uniform really is so cool!

I asked him to wear it occasionally at home, but he refused...

Isn't it fine if it's just in the house~?

Yurie-sama and Aira-sama also graduated from middle school and entered the high school section, and Emperor Kaburagi got depressed that he was stuck in primary and the gap was even wider now.

I mean, a love between a primary schooler and high schooler is just impossible, right~?

I think he should just give up already, but this first love of his is supposed to continue until high school, so I guess there's no reason he'll give up now.

According to Aira-sama Intelligence, Kaburagi isn't stalking Yurie-sama, but because they don't get to meet often, he's expressing his feelings by letter. It worked last time, so it looks like he's encouraged because of it.

Since I also became a 6th Grader, next year I'll be riding the escalator system into middle school. Having said that though, I'm preparing for our internal examinations, so I ended up getting a home tutor.

My home teacher is Ousaka Karin-sensei and she goes to a national university.

She comes over twice a week.

In my cram school exams, I rose in the rankings from upper-middle to lower-upper. I thought I made a good effort amongst all these kids from prep schools, but I really do

wonder how I'm supposed to feel when I can't even get first place amongst primary schoolers.

Once I enter middle school, maths and arithmetic are going to turn into a monster. I need to try hard while I still can.

Karin-sensei's explanations are easy to understand and I make progress studying with her. Even if I don't get it the first time when I see it at cram school, it really helps that I can have her follow up.

For a while now, sometimes Oniisama teaches me as well, but the feeling of tension is different. I just keep spoiling myself with him since he's family.

"You learn quickly, don't you, Reika-san. Really, well done for getting this far."

Karin-sensei often says stuff like that to praise me.

Apparently she's the type who praises people to get them to try harder.

And I'm the type that gets fired up when I'm praised or flattered, so we have pretty good compatibility, I think.

Ever since that day in winter, I've been sitting with Akizawa-kun and Fukioka-san in my Maths and Japanese cram classes.

Fukioka-san sits right in the middle, with Akizawa-kun and I to her sides. Fukioka-san wouldn't let Akizawa-kun sit in the middle, you see.

I also exchanged mail addresses with Fukioka-san, and we've gotten quite a bit closer.

Contrary to her appearance as a Japanese-style beauty, Fukioka-san has quite the venomous tongue.

On Valentines Day that year, I gave my hand-made chocolates to Aoi-chan and Fukioka-san.

At Suiran we expect that Valentines chocolates are better quality than even high-class

stores, so it's my first time giving hand-made chocolates to anybody but my family. Last year Aira-sama taught me how to make them, and Otousama even said "This is the best one you've made so far.", but this year Aira-sama was also busy with exam prep, so I tried using the recipe that she taught me last year to make it. Oniisama also said "Making one like last year would taste good." So I handed them over to them filled with confidence.

Aoi-chan told me "It was yummy." but Fukioka-san said "It's not very good."... "It's not bad, but the taste is kind of lacking. Did you use cheap chocolate to make this?" she said. So rude! I used chocolate from Belgium! When I told her that in complaint, she ended up replying "Apologise to Belgium"... Fukioka-san, the gap between your appearance and inside is too huge...

Incidentally, I didn't give one to Akizawa-kun. Whether it's a friendship chocolate or a courtesy chocolate, Fukioka-san would probably get mad regardless. In my mind, Fukioka-san is under the 'cannot make into an enemy' category. Apparently she's learning to cook to prepare for her future as Akizawa-kun's wife. How amazing. She's got a much better idea of her future than I do. She's actually planned so much that it's even a little scary. And you know, Akizawa-kun, it's impossible for you to escape now. I'm scared of Fukioka-san too, so I'm afraid I can't help you. Forgive your cowardly friend!

And so, Fukioka-san asked me, "What if you learnt as well?" but I'll probably be busy with the internal exams this year, so I turned her invitation down. When I got home, I told Oniisama "My friend told me the taste was lacking." and he replied "The person's feelings are more important than the taste in situations like this." and I wasn't sure how to feel about that. When I get into middle school, maybe I really should start learning...

Right now, Aoi-chan is my Soothing Friend.

She's docile and seems withdrawn, but once you're closer with her, she starts laughing a lot.

She would definitely never say something like "the taste is lacking". What a good girl. And what's more, shockingly! Aoi-chan told me that she went to visit her grandpa on New Years! She got me a Tarow the Taro plush keychain! I'm so happy!

When I got home, I immediately put house keys on it. There's always a maid around and somebody chauffeurs me places and back, so to begin with I've never used a key before. But I do carry one around just in case.

And my keys were now hanging from Tarow. His pathetic face is really cute.

Aoi-chan has amazing sense for souvenirs. She totally knew what I wanted.

And shocking! For the holidays in spring, she got me region-exclusive potato chips!

Aoi-chan said stuff like "Although I'm not sure if you would even eat this sort of stuff..." in embarrassment, but I'll eat it, you know! Or rather, it's my favourite! I've wanted to eat potato chips for six years now, you know!

The potato chips were in a souvenir bag, and I carefully snuck it into my room so that Okaasama wouldn't see. It was late at night when I sneakily ate it.

So nostalgic. My body trembled from the cheap taste.

It would be a shame to eat it all in one go, so I decided to treasure it and eat it little by little, but the next day I cried when I found it soggy.

Incidentally, I call Aoi-chan 'Aoi-chan' in my mind, but in front of the girl herself it's "Yorino-san".

I don't have the courage to use her first name. I mean, I'd hate it if she went "Eh-? What's with that all of a sudden?".

It's hard to find a chance to start things like this, isn't it?

My homeroom teacher wanted me to be class rep. It sounded troublesome so I said

that I sucked at management and refused, but they pressed me and said that vice rep was fine, and in the end I became vice rep... or rather I got stuck with it.

That was probably the plan from the beginning. After all, the position of class rep went to this boy who had done it a bunch of times already.

Teacher swindled me using that 'ask big first, then go for small' trick.

I got totally fooled. In the end, I was stuck as the odd job girl again.

Though it's true that my thimbles still lie sleeping in my pencilcase though.

But this time it's just within my class, so without my natural enemies here, things went smoothly.

Collecting forms was easy too, since the scary army of girls behind me made everybody cooperative.

Class Rep even said, "As expected of Kisshouin-san". I don't think he was praising me though.

It was like I was the bodyguard of some debt collector.

This is weird. This isn't how things were supposed to be. I get the feeling that recently I've been losing my elegance.

CHAPTER 38

Few things to note first.

- 1. Primary schoolers in Japan apparently go to Kyoto and Nara for their class trips. Generally.*
- 2. A ryokan (旅館) is a type of traditional Japanese inn that originated in the Edo period (1603–1868), when such inns served travelers along Japan's highways. They typically feature tatami-matted rooms, communal baths, and other public areas where visitors may wear yukata and talk with the owner.*



3.



4. *Kaiseki (懐石) or kaiseki-ryouri (懐石料理) is a traditional multi-course Japanese dinner. Served on these things:*



- 5.
6. *During a proper meal with these things, you are NOT supposed to leave your seat.*
7. *Kyouyasai, or Kyouto(Kyoto) Vegetables, is the term for a number of heirloom vegetables originating in the Kyoto Prefecture of Japan. The characteristics of these heirloom vegetables are odd shapes and the rich nutrient profiles, thus they take a lot of time to grow because they aren't easy to cultivate. Because of this, Kyo-yasai are very costly and much more expensive than ordinary vegetables. Thus, they are often eaten in the home, or in upscale restaurants.*
-

June came, and so did the class trip, or 'learning excursion'.

Suiran is a primary school filled with rich kids, so I thought for sure that we'd be going overseas for our trip, but to think that it was Kyoto and Nara.

So normal...

Well, the level of the hotels and food that we're getting is a totally different level from normal primary schoolers though.

We ate lots of Kyoto cuisine filled with Kyoto vegetables, as well as boiled tofu kaiseki meals, and relaxed in the place we were staying; a high-class and very old Japanese-style ryokan inn.

It's all too refined and austere for a primary schooler.

But man, if we let loose and had a pillow fight in a high-class ryokan like this, it'd be terrible if we missed and tore a hole through the paper of the shoji sliding doors.

I'd better keep a good eye on everyone.

To think that of all possible years I could become vice rep, it would be one with our class trip.

I have to go look for students late to meeting points, and warn students talking during a tour guide's explanation, and just lots of other annoying stuff.

But my class is still on the better side of things. We don't have Kaburagi, Enjou or anybody else disruptive like that, so my class is actually pretty tame.

The girls have been cooperating with me from the beginning and doing things like supporting me with the roll-call, or making sure we get lights out on time, and thanks to them I'm having a way easier time than all the other reps.

Class Rep is also doing his best to manage the boys after all. Occasionally when there are some guys who are too excited for him to stop, "Kisshouin Reika and her friends" surround them and silence them with smiles.

So my class is on the peaceful side of things.

I'm sure the teacher gave me this role because they suspected this would happen. I mean, even though there are girls more serious and diligent than I am, with experience as class reps too, I was the one who got nominated.

Well, if my presence helps this trip to go smoothly, then I guess it's fine being used like this.

All the reps from the other classes seem to be having a dreadful time of it, after all.

Apparently the reps can't stop the girls from noisily following Kaburagi and Enjou about.

Enjou at least tells the girls himself to calm down, but Kaburagi has no reaction so it's a lawless zone.

During our meals the girls all left their seats as they please, and you seriously want to ask them "Are you girls *actually* young ladies from good families?".

The class reps couldn't stop them, so they only reluctantly returned to their seats after a warning from their homeroom teachers.

The atmosphere feels pretty strained, huh~

When they made this fuss when they were small, it was still just little girls being cute,

but the older they get, the more annoying girls appear, and you need quite a bit of effort to deal with them.

There are even girls who seem like they'll become the flashy nouveau riche-type ojouasamas in the future, and there's a bit of a hard-to-describe enmity between our groups.

Aahh, I'm glad they're all in a different class~ Or so I was thinking, like somebody uninvolved, when the class rep of Kaburagi's class suddenly screamed '*Please help me!*' with his eyes.

I pretended like I didn't notice.

Nah, I mean, it's not my place as an outsider to say anything, and if I did say something, normally you'd react like "God, just how controlling *is* this chick?" right?

I've got my hands filled with my own clas-

"Kisshouin-san. Umm, it looks like the class rep of Class 3 is sending an SOS signal, but..."

Don't report things that nobody wanted to know, Class Rep.

"Is it not simply your imagination?"

"No, well~ His eyes are completely serious, so. And even though it's almost lights out time, the girls are making a fuss and showing no signs of heading back, so."

"But it is the problem of another class."

"Well yeah, but, it'll trouble the people of the inn."

Well, I do feel sorry about that.

To begin with, these primary schoolers are a bunch of kids who wouldn't understand mature aesthetics if it hit them in the face, so it's weird that you'd pick such an elegant and traditional ryokan to bring them to.

"Then perhaps you should go, Class Rep."

"...You're saying that even though you know it's impossible for me, right?"

Well, yeah.

Girls are scary in groups, aren't they. But I'm scared too.

Hm? Hey, it looks like girls from another class are swarming Kaburagi too. Their class rep couldn't stop them either?

It must be scary, huh~ But you knowww, as a fellow rep, I understand your toils.

Can't be helped.

Kikuno-chan is relatively moderate even within the boisterous girls of Kaburagi's class, so I headed over to her first.

"Kikuno-san."

"Ah-, Reika-sama."

"Quite noisy over here, is it not? Even though it is almost time for lights out..."

"That's true. Those girls don't think about how they're bothering Kaburagi-sama..."

Kikuno-chan replied with a sour look.

"Quite true. This inn is a favourite of his Okaasama, and each time she visits Kyoto she stays here. And yet, if she knew that there were girls bothering the people here with

their noise, I wonder just what she would think of it.”

Aira-sama Intelligence.

“Eh-, the regular inn of Kaburagi-sama’s Okaasama!?”

Girls who heard our conversation glanced our way.

“You have your act together, so it does not matter for you, Kikuno-san, but perhaps it would be better if your class took care not to trouble her favourite inn, lest you earn her ire. I heard that she is a strict woman when it comes to discipline.”

The girls who were eavesdropping on my conversation with Kikuno-chan all started to fall quiet.

“Ahh, it appears that it is time for lights out now. Good night, everybody.”

“Good night, Reika-sama.”

“Good night, Reika-sama.”

Things seem okay for now.

There would be too much conflict had I warned them directly. I don’t want more enemies.

If I overdo things, people will hate me for being a goody-two-shoes.

Or rather, Kaburagi, warn them yourself! It’s an inn that your own mum likes, you know?

Well, even if it wasn’t, being too noisy isn’t a good thing.

And although he was gazing into the distance unconcernedly, I’ll bet his head was just filled with thoughts of what souvenirs to buy Yurie-sama anyway. There’s no

mistaking it.

I suppose there's no choice but to inform Yurie-sama through Aira-sama, and get her to give him a scolding, huh.

During the day, we went visiting shrines and temples, and souvenir shopping.

The matchmaker shrine was the most popular spot for the girls. After all, their romantic interest was close by, which just made their prayers all the more earnest.

Apparently Kikuno-chan who was in Kaburagi's class even made sure to introduce him to god with, "The one standing beneath the willow tree is Kaburagi Masaya! I leave things in your capable hands!".

They also had to buy love fortunes and amulets for romance, so everyone was really rushing in the short time frame we were given.

I had thought that it would only be girls who would enjoy the matchmaker shrine, but quite a few boys were earnest in pulling fortune slips for romance too, so I was a little surprised.

Class Rep was one of them. I wonder who the girl is.

I went with all the girls and got one as well.

'future blessing'

I'm not sure how to feel about this...

Also, for the fortunes,

(大吉, *dai-kichi*): *great blessing*

(中吉, *chuu-kichi*): *middle blessing*

(小吉, *shou-kichi*): *small blessing*

(吉, *kichi*) *blessing*

(半吉, *han-kichi*): *half-blessing*

(末吉, *sue-kichi*): future blessing

(末小吉, *sue-shou-kichi*): future small blessing

(凶, *kyou*): curse

(小凶, *shou-kyou*): small curse

(半凶, *han-kyou*): half-curse

(末凶, *sue-kyou*): future curse

(大凶, *dai-kyou*): great curse

CHAPTER 39

The Man'yōshū is the oldest existing collection of Japanese poetry, compiled sometime after 759 AD during the Nara period. The anthology is one of the most revered of Japan's poetic compilations. i.e. an anthology of classic Japanese poems written when Nara was still the capital of ancient Japan.

Princess Nukata (額田王 Nukata no Ōkimi?, c. 630–690 CE) (also known as Princess Nukada) was a Japanese poet of the Asuka period. Nukata was one of the great female poets of her time; thirteen of her poems appear in the **Man'yōshū**.

The below poem alludes to her illicit affair with her younger-brother-in-law, Emperor Tenmu, where 'waving' refers to beckoning or soliciting.

akane sasu | The madder-shining
murasaki no yuki | Purple murasaki fields he goes around,
shimeno yuki | The staked fields around:
nomori wa mizu ya | Won't the guardsman
kimi ga sode furu | See you wave your sleeve, my lord?

Hōryū-ji (法隆寺, lit. Temple of the Flourishing Law) is a Buddhist temple that was once one of the powerful Seven Great Temples, in Ikaruga, **Nara Prefecture, Japan**. Its full name is Hōryū Gakumonji (法隆学問寺), or Learning Temple of the Flourishing Law, the complex serving as both a seminary and monastery.

Yumedono (夢殿, lit. Hall of Dreams), a hall in Hōryū-ji, associated with **Prince Shōtoku**.

Masaoka Shiki (正岡 子規?, October 14, 1867 – September 19, 1902), was a Japanese poet, author, and literary critic in Meiji period Japan. Shiki is regarded as a major figure in the development of modern haiku poetry.

Haiku on **Nara** by Shiki: "Persimmon and Temple Bell"

kaki kueba | as I eat a persimmon
kane ga narunari | the bell starts booming
houryuuji | Hōryū-ji

“Hi Izuru Tokoro no Tenshi” (Emperor of the Land of the Rising Sun)

The name of a Japanese manga written and illustrated by Ryoko Yamagishi that tells a fictionalised account of Prince Shōtoku. Incidentally, the title is derived from a diplomatic letter to the Sui Emperor, allegedly written by Prince Shoutoku, that reads:

「日出處天子致書日沒處天子無恙云云」

「The Emperor of the Land of the Rising Sun writes to the Emperor of the Land of the Setting Sun, and I hope you are well.」

A record of this remains in the Japanese Nihonshiki and Chinese Book of Sui.

[Story begins!]

Nara turned out to be mostly shrines and temple visits as well.

Honestly speaking, justtt as I was kind of getting fed up with it, there was a girl reciting the manyoushuu.

The girls around her were giving her looks of respect.

A primary schooler chanting poems from the manyoushuu. So *this* is what refinement is!? *This is true* refinement!?

I definitely want to follow her example!

Of the poems in the manyoushuu, the only one I remember is from my old life, Princess Nukata's *akanegasu*.

I'd play Princess Nukata with my friends and we'd wave our hands jokingly saying, “If you wave your hand so much, the guardsman will see you, you know~”

It would be weird if I suddenly remembered Princess Nukata's poem here when his place has nothing to do with it, and it'd be bad if I flared up her sense of rivalry, so I decided just to keep quiet and watch as they proceeded to display their refinement.

Apparently lots of other girls had the same idea, because from here and there, I started hearing “kaki kueba” and “houryuuji”. Far from refined, they just seemed silly.

Naturally I didn't participate.

Only, when we visited the Yumedono, I accidentally muttered “the Emperor of the Land of the Rising Sun”. The tour guide heard me and said I was wonderful, praising me, which in turn caused the girls around me to say “As expected of Reika-sama”.

All I did was mutter the name of a shoujo manga though...

But I decided against clearing the misunderstanding.

At Nara Park, an incident occurred.

I was walking gracefully about the park with crackers for the deers in my hand, when I was suddenly surrounded by a herd of them.

The girls with me immediately ran, but I alone was too late to!

Huge! Deers, huge!

Scary! Horns, scary!

Hurts! Being jabbed in the back! GYAAH! They took the crackers!

“Reika-sama, run!”

“KYAAA! A deer is, Reika-sama...!”

“Reika-sama, throw the crackers far away!”

I tried tossing the crackers far away, but they flapped in the air and landed right at my feet.

GYAAH!

I was being kicked, and rammed, and only when they realised I had no more crackers in hand did they finally look for for another target, one by one.

“Reika-sama, are you all right!?”

“Aahh! Poor Reika-sama!”

“...I am fine, everybody. Thank you.”

What the heck was that. A gang? A deer gang? A deer mafia?

Weren't they too damn rough...?

Even though I recall them being more heartwarming when I came here in my last life, what the heck happened to them?

The girls around me helped me dust the dirt off my clothing, and just as I had finally managed to get my clothing in order and started to calm down, I met eyes with the Kaburagi, who was looking my way with a grin.

That guy freaking laughed at me...

So mortifying! I wanna throw deer crackers all around him!

But right now I have a more compelling problem.

Nobody has noticed.

The fact that I stepped on deer poop.

“It is about time to return. Reika-sama, that must have been truly rough on you.”

“Right? To think that deers were actually so scary. Even though the ones I gave my crackers to were all so cute.”

“Does it hurt anywhere? GEEZ! None of the boys even tried to help! You're all pathetic!”

While walking happily with everybody, I sneakily slid my loafers to get the poop off with absolutely nobody the wiser.

I made sure to hint that the reason I was walking like this was because I had hurt my leg when the deers kicked it.

After that, we went to Kasuga Grand Shrine, and I made sure to ask the gods to discipline those deers properly.

The place had cute deer fortunes and up until yesterday I would have flown right over to buy one, but the scars in my heart still hadn't healed from that deer assault, so I even looked at the cute deer carvings with dangerous eyes.

But everyone was making a fuss about how cute they were, so when they went to buy some, I went as well.

'blessing'

Again, not quite sure how to feel about this...

The one good thing about the Deer Assault Incident was that it felt a bit like I was closer to the girls around me now.

It'd be nice if they slowly turned from followers to friends.

I decided to begin by casually playing up our friendship.

"Really, thank you for earlier. Friends truly are the most important thing, aren't they."

Everybody smiled happily.

Could it be that we've actually been friends for a long time now?

But after the Deer Assault Incident, every time I passed by Kaburagi, his shoulders would start to tremble.

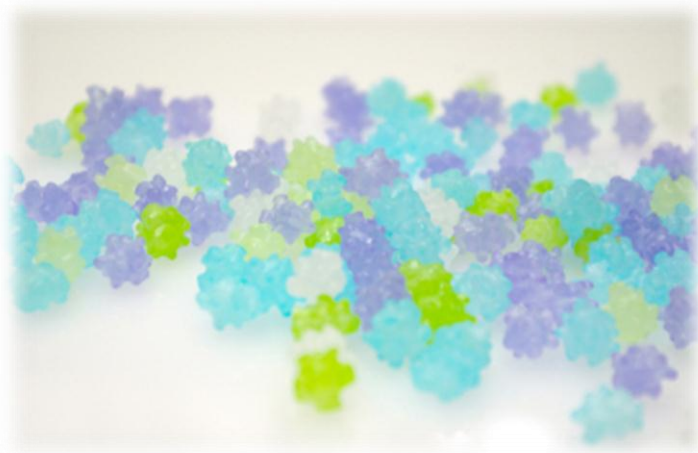
KIIIIIIII!!!

That's it, I'm telling Yurie-sama on him.

Laugh all you want.

When we come back to Tokyo, the one crying will be *youuuu*.

I had bought soaps from the inn, and some cute konpeitoh rock candies for Aoi-chan and Fukioka-san.



konpeitoh rock candy

I had originally been choosing between the traditional oil-removing facial paper or yatsushashi, when my stylishness sent a flash of inspiration through me.

Yatsushashi is a Japanese confectionery made from glutinous rice flour, sugar and cinnamon.

Apparently Fukioka-san told Akizawa-kun in advance to buy them a matching pair of romantic luck charms.

Getting him to buy a pair of matching romance charms was apparently also part of the scheme to hold back the Suiran girls.

As expected of you, Fukioka-san.

Even though I bought Oniisama a safe driving charm, he refused to hang it on the car mirror, so I was a little dissatisfied.

He muttered “This is a little...” but why?

Apparently Yurie-sama got mad at Kaburagi for not warning the girls around him not to cause trouble for others.

Serrrrvesss youuu righttttt. Ukyakyakyakyakya!

And then the next day, through Aira-sama, I received a certain photo from Yurie-sama. It was a photo of me being beaten up by a herd of deers.

Aira-sama ended up sympathising with me, and said “That must have been harsh. Yurie was shocked to see this too”.

UKIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII!!

IMPOSSIBLE TO FORGIVE!!

Aburatorigami (あぶらとり紙) is a traditional Japanese facial oil blotting paper. The direct translation of the term is “oil removal paper”. As the term implies, aburatorigami absorbs excess oil, thereby eliminating shine from the face. Aburatorigami has traditionally been used by kabuki actors and geisha to keep makeup looking fresh throughout performances. In modern times it has been growing in popularity for everyday use amongst women for its various skincare and makeup benefits.

CHAPTER 40

As autumn deepened, we began choosing photos for our graduation album.

I'm not a member of the graduation committee, but I decided to cooperate as proactively with them as possible.

I think it should be alright, but on the off chance that somebody entered a picture of my shame during the Deer Assault Incident, it'd become the shame of my life.

At the moment there aren't any weird photos of me, but you can never be too careful.

The photos in the album are being chosen from those taken by Suiran's exclusive cameraman as well as photos that the students want in them.

Well, it's something I knew would happen, but the photos are kinda biased towards certain students, huhh~

The ones contributed by the students were almost all Kaburagi and Enjou photos, and mostly ones with the contributors in it. Stuff they'd want to remember I guess.

If we accepted all of these, it would end up as a Kaburagi-Enjou album, so we rejected most of them.

There are lots of photos of the more salient students, and the more docile and plain students are getting overlooked, so they're checking the photos carefully.

If after we graduated and some kid said "I'm... not in a single photo..." or something, they'd really feel hurt after all. Their happy parents would be sad too.

And we're carefully comparing the photos and student roster.

"It really helps that you're assisting us, Reika-sama."

The one who said that with a smile was Honda Miharu-chan from my class.

We're in different groups, but she's a serious and diligent girl, and was the vice rep from last year.

“Besides the class and group photos, it takes a lot of work to check the student-contributed photos, after all.”

“Yeah. I almost missed one.”

The docile kids don't submit their own photos, and sometimes there isn't even a single photo of them.

In those cases, members of the album committee go take photos of 'school lunch' or the like. And if possible, take photos where the kid isn't by himself, but instead having fun with their friends.

The teacher in charge of the album is checking it together with us, so it should be fine though.

While I'm at it, I'm trying my best to select the cuter ones.

I'm helping out, so just this much bias is okay, right?

“This is a photo of the Petite Pivoine isn't it.”

The photo being held out to me was from the other day, when our cameraman came to the salon.

Each year the Pivoine has its own special group photo. We *are* technically the face of the school, after all.

In the centre of the photo was Emperor on the couch with Enjou next to him, with the other members surrounding them. On each side of the photo was a red peony, the namesake of the group.

But the problem was that I was sitting next to Emperor.

Even though there were heaps of other girls who wanted that spot, why me?

But everybody else was like, “Please, go ahead Reika-sama” and recommended it to me without listening, so I couldn't refuse.

If I made it too obvious I didn't want to, Emperor would probably get upset after all.

‘At the very least, next to Enjou then...’ I thought, but Enjou refused me with his smile.

...So mean.

Thanks to that, I got warned a bunch of times by the cameraman for having a stiff smile, and the guy next to me started clicking his tongue, and I had a horrible time of it.

This photo had *that* kind of backstory.

“So this is the Pivoine’s salon. How wonderful. It’s like a dream...”

So said the album committee members as they looked at the photo in a daze.

Mn, it’s a needlessly luxurious room, isn’t it. The “bearing of a ruler” peonies just make it even more luxurious.

Because even in this Suiran Academy that feels all rich already, the Pivoine is just in a different class. After all, the normal students aren’t allowed in.

Even though the truth is that all we do is drink tea, eat sweets, and laze around. Mn? Could that just be me?

“More importantly, let us hurry and decide on the photos.”

Because they seemed to be forgetting why we were here, I called out to them and we started working again.

Oh! It’s a picture of Akizawa-kun in the baton relay. I wonder if Fukioka-san has this. If I tell her about it, she’d probably tell me to bring it to her.

Naturally, the photo of Kaburagi in the cavalry battle is definitely going in. Rather, if we didn’t, we’d definitely meet some massive booing.

In this year’s cavalry battle, Kaburagi’s unit was unchallenged again. Apparently they practised in secret. Even though he always acts so cool and uncaring, he actually hates losing.

After showing unrivalled strength two years in a row, Emperor began a legend. Upfftpfft.

It was hard picking from the huge number of photos, but there were photos with unexpected sides of kids that I didn't often talk to, so it was pretty interesting too. The photos go back as far as Year 1, so there are some kids who look completely different now too. Six years for children changes them a shocking amount, doesn't it. Since Year 1, I've always been a fake Rococo. I seriously want an image change already...

For a while now, my eyes have been meeting with Class Pres a lot.

He keeps looking my way, and when I return the gaze, he immediately averts his eyes. I tried asking if he needed anything a few times, but he would always turn red and avoid a proper answer.

Even at lunch just now, our eyes met.

I wonder what's up.

"Reika-sama, is something the matter?"

Honda-san from the photo committee called out to me.

"No, it is nothing."

I gave a smile as I replied.

Well, maybe it's just my imagination.

"...I never expected the day to come that I'd be able to talk to you like this, Reika-sama, so I'm kind of happy."

Honda-san said that with a shy smile.

Wah, so cute!

Honda-san is a diligent-type that you'd expect to be a class rep, so she's kind of

different from the types in my group. Because of that we haven't spoken much outside of passing on messages.

But this girl gives off the same cuteness as Aoi-chan.

She's definitely a good girl, I'm sure. I wanna be friends.

"I am also glad that we became friends, Miharu-san."

Because of my success during the school trip, I've taken a liking to this high-pressure salesman style of getting friends. It's better to speak first for things like this.

Although in secret your heart kinda thumps as you wonder what you're gunna do if they say "Huh? I never thought we were friends. So pushy."

"Eh-, friends!? Ah-m, I'm happy too."

Uhuhu, another friend GET.

With graduation approaching, as is customary, signature books began to pop up.

Speaking of which, I had one too didn't I, a signature book. How nostalgic.

Back when I was lazy in my old life, at first I was happy to sign things, but along the way I started to get annoyed, and stopped caring what I wrote.

And also, you don't do it often, so it's surprisingly hard to write a short message, isn't it? You only get as many variations as New Year's cards, and there really isn't much to say.

You try and write stylish and mature things, different from everybody else, and so it ends up as more dark history. That's why signature books are actually really dangerous.

I was the same in the beginning. Each time I remember the stuff I wrote, it makes me want to bang my head on a desk. It's just that embarrassing.

Even weird poems and stuff...

Aahh-! If only I had psychic powers and could burn those books right now!

Anyway, some people came around asking for me to sign their books too.

Even though pretty much everybody here at Suiran just moves onto the middle school section, why bother with these signature books? Or so I thought, but then I considered that it would be sadder if *nobody* asked for mine, so bothersome as it was, I accepted with a smile.

I just used a beautiful seal and signed in coloured pen to get out of actually writing anything.

“Reika-sama, could I have you write something in my signature book?”

Honda Miharuchan came asking as well. We’re friends so of course I accepted, and I had her sign in mine too.

Incidentally, my signature book was prepared by Okaasama, and was apparently made by some royal purveyor of stationery in Europe. Just a cheap one with cute pictures would be enough, you know...

Apparently a long queue formed to get the signatures of the famous two.

The girls in my class were really pumped to get them too.

Ever since Kaburagi got told off by Yurie-sama, he’s gotten a little more cooperative in the past, and although he had an annoyed look on his face, he did sign them properly. Just his name though. Seriously, just a signature.

Apparently some kids even said stuff like “Please address it to ____!”. Are they movie stars or something?

Some of the girls showed me their books, but it was seriously just “Kaburagi Masaya” in the middle of the page.

Incidentally, he did write their names. As you’d expect, his penmanship was fantastic. As for Enjou’s, besides their names he also wrote “congratulations on your graduation” on each one.

Well, they're both pretty bad.

To a person like me who's struggling to come up with original messages, I kind of envy their boldness.

Anyway, while thinking about all these things, after school I was walking down a hallway by myself as I was heading to the salon. That was when a nervous looking Class Rep called out to me.

CHAPTER 41

“Umm, Kisshouin-san. There’s a little something I’d like to talk to you about. Is that okay?”

From his face, it looked like something pretty big, so we went behind the school building where less people were around.

“What might this be?”

It looks like he’s been wanting to talk to me for a while, after all.

But Class Rep just fidgeted, and didn’t manage to start speaking.

Seems like it was something hard to say, so I just stayed quiet and waited.

“Umm, since you’re a smart person, Kisshouin-san, I thought maybe you’d already noticed.”

“My, me, a smart person? Not at all.”

I wonder if that’s how he sees me in his head.

But still, I wonder what this is about.

I really can’t think of anything at all~

Ah-, his face turned red.

Seriouslyy, what’s up~?

“The truth is, I like Honda-san.”

“.....”

'I wonder what it is I have no idea what this could be this is definitely a confession', I thought.

I'M SUCH AN EMBARRASSING PERSONNNN!!

I wanna be one of those bobble head toys and just continue to bow in apology!

'Is it finally my turn for a shoujo manga development!?' I accidentally thought.

"Um, Kisshouin-san? Is something wrong?"

“...No, nothing at all.”

Let's just continue the conversation like nothing happened.

"Well? You say you like Honda-san, but why speak to *me* about it?"

Yeah, seriously. To begin with, why speak to *me* about this?

You know... it's Class Rep's fault as well for being misleading, right?

If he likes Miharu-chan, then can't he just tell *her* that? Why keep glancing my way, and call me out to a place like this?

It has nothing to do with me, right?

Or so I was thinking, getting angry even though I was in the wrong.

"Because you're like the leader of the girls, Kisshouin-san. I thought maybe you could cooperate with me, or something like that."

"Cooperate? Helping you confess?"

"Confess!? I just wanted to find out more about her. Also, if possible, I want you to use this."

What he shyly handed over to me was a picture of Class Rep and Honda-san together in class.

I guess he wants me to put this in the album?

After that, Class Rep started talking his heart out to me.

About how he was class rep with her last year and ended up liking her.

About how when he cut his finger, Honda-san bandaged it for him, and about how she did girly things.

About how he thought he'd get to be class rep with her this year too, but got depressed when it was somebody else.

(Well *sorryyy* that it was me!)

"Also, I want her to write on this too..."

He brought out a signature book.

I thought that only girls did this stuff, but do boys do it too?

Speaking of which, there were boys all into the matchmaker shrine too, weren't there. I may have a surprisingly high number of effeminate boys in my grade.

"Class Rep, you also pulled a love fortune at Kyoto, didn't you."

"It was 'great blessing'."

Again, his face went red.

Well, good for you then. I got 'future blessing', you know?

"Leaving the photo aside, what if you asked for the signature yourself? Why is there a need for *me* to ask?"

"Because it's hard to suddenly ask for one, you know? We're not even class reps together anymore, so we hardly even talk."

"...Well, I apologise for becoming the vice rep then."

I stabbed right into his happy attitude.

As expected, Class Rep went into a panic and started saying stuff like "*Not at all! You've been really, really helpful!*".

Hmph.

"I understand. Very well, then. In that case, while Honda-san and I are together, come casually asking for my signature. You can use our being class reps as an excuse. At that time, I will casually bring up the fact that Honda-san also served with you last year, and from there, please ask her for her signature."

"Eh-, can I really pull off so much acting? Ah-, but I'll do my best."

He looks uneasy.

Was Class Rep this kind of boy? I thought he was more of a diligent, and stereotypical 'class rep' type, you know?

On a later day, Class Rep came along with signature book in hand, and subjected us to some monotone acting.

Miharu-chan showed no signs of noticing his feelings, and happily accepted. While she was at it, she asked for Class Rep's signature as well, so he turned red.

After that, when I asked Miharu-chan if she liked anyone at the moment, she said that she didn't but her type was something like Enjou-sama. And so I went and passed that info to Class Rep, who went "Enjou-kun, huh..." and got depressed.

"It's not like she actually likes Enjou himself. Her type is simply similar to him. Doesn't that mean you still have hope?" I said in consolation, but it didn't look like it had much effect.

Sorry, Class Rep. I was a little mean to you.

And also, it looks like girls and boys who got close because of the signature book popped up here and there.

Nothing particularly happened to me though.

The adult me thinks that romance is way too early for primary schoolers, but who really knows, huh~?

It's not like I'm saying this because of an inferiority complex, okay?

Ahhh, we're graduating next year, huhh?

Once I enter middle school, I wonder if spring will come for *me* this time.

I only got 'future blessing' so my hopes are slim though.

CHAPTER 42

In Japanese, the two main characters for flower(hana) are 花 and 華. The latter is rather more poetic/fanciful, and is actually used in Reika's name. Specifically, 麗華 (Reika) means 'beautiful flower', 'graceful flower', 'lovely flower' etc. The characters can also be as 'urara'.

An ephemeral-type beauty in Japan is somebody that's typically delicate, very fair-skinned, slender like a willow, and generally 'soft' or 'fragile' somehow. Like, somewhat fairy or sylph-like, with an atmosphere that's faint and somewhat unreal. Like a beauty that you might see in a passing dream or something? Well, it sounds a bit exaggerated, but if the description wasn't then it would be a bajillion-times harder to explain.

The day of the graduation ceremony came.

Everybody is going up the escalator together, so we'll all meet again in Suiran's middle school section. Although we'll be in a different building, we're all on the same property, so I'm not really feeling lonely about it.

Maybe everybody else was thinking like me, because nobody cried.

Only, this would be the last time we would be wearing this navy uniform to school, so everybody was busy taking photos.

Of course, I took some with my friends too.

Because today was a happy occasion, Okaasama was more fired up than usual, and had my hair even curlier today.

Also, both Kaburagi and Enjou have been surrounded by girls since this morning.

Heaps of boys from the lower grades who went out of their way to attend were also photographing and filming the 'Hero of the Cavalry Battle'.

Besides my parents who were here, Oniisama brought me a bouquet of flowers!

There were pink roses, carnations, garberas, and a bunch of other really cute flowers.

Thank you, Oniisama! As for not just giving me a bunch of bright red roses, as expected of you! In Oniisama's mind, my image is more like these cute pink flowers, isn't it! Or so I was thinking, feeling deeply moved, when Oniisama pointed at a deeply coloured rose and said,

"These flowers are called 'Urara', you know. They're your flowers, aren't they, Reika?"

-ZUKKYUUUUUUN!!-

Oniisama! Just what manner of being are you!?

My flowers! My roses!

My maiden's heart is so moved that I don't think it'll hold!

It looks like today, with just Oniisama, I'm already feeling totally popular!

His smile is so dazzling-!

Or so I was thinking, as I writhed about in happiness on the inside, while my friends around me were also saying "Reika-sama's Oniisama, so dreamy...", spellbound.

Isn't he! Isn't he!

My Oniisama is the best in the world!

Still, although they're minors, they're still maidens and Oniisama pierced right through their hearts. I was actually a little nervous, secretly wondering where on earth he learnt this skill.

Oniisama doesn't work any strange jobs, does he?

Watching Oniisama, Okaasama looked satisfied and said "as expected of my son" while Otousama looked a little ashamed and embarrassed for not bringing anything.

It's fine, Otousama. For things like this, it's your feelings that count.

Rather, if the chubby Otousama did the same thing as Oniisama, I'd be a little grossed out.

While I was happy about the roses with my name, and getting photos under the sakura trees with my family, a parent and child group came along.

“Congratulations on your daughter’s graduation, Kisshouin-sama.”

“Oohh! Why if it isn’t Kaburagi-sama! Congratulations on *Masaya-kun’s* graduation, I should say!”

UHIIIII! It’s gone from heaven to hell!

Why did they come talk to us!?

“Reika-san, congratulations on graduating. What beautiful flowers you have. They fit you perfectly.”

“T-, Thank you very much.”

Today Mrs. Kaburagi was wearing a vivid, deep blue suit, and was even more beautiful than when I met her in the restaurant.

Quite a contrast to the elegant white suit that my Okaasama was wearing.

“Reika-san, please do get along with Masaya in middle school.”

“My! Our Reika as well! We certainly hope Masaya-kun gets along with her. Right, Reika-san?”

Without affirming or denying Okaasama, I simply smiled away.

What a horrible development. A horrible, horrible development.

Please, just go away without causing any trouble.

My prayer bore no fruit, because our parents just continued to chat, and chat.

When I happened to look forward, I met gazes with the bored-looking Kaburagi.

“Hmm,” he huffed, as he looked away.

Uwah~ Totally indifferent to me.

Don’t think I want to get close to a guy like you, either!

“Reika-san, do you remember what we spoke about earlier? Please do come over to play.”

“Hah?”

Kaburagi wrinkled his nose in displeasure and looked at his mother.

“Thank you very much.”

For now I just smiled. I’m definitely not going, okay.

Look, Kaburagi is looking all unhappy about it. He’s got a *‘Why the hell is she coming to our house?’* face on. Wah-, he’s glaring!

“My, myy! Reika-san, you must definitely visit them!”

“Isn’t that greatt, Reika? Ahaha, our Reika adores Masaya-kun, you see.”

I don’t adore him! Why the hell are you spouting bullshit, Otousama!

Okaasama’s eyes are sparkling!

Aahh, what do I do...

Why don’t they notice Kaburagi’s displeased aura!?

I don’t adore you, okay! I have no intention of going, okay! So please just stop glaring at me so angrily!

I entreated the nearby Oniisama with my eyes, but he just made a troubled expression and seemed to decide on watching things pan out.

Somebody save meeeee!

“Mum, Shuusuke and the others are here, so I’m going.”

“My, Shuusuke-kun?”

Enjou and a person who seemed to be his mother came out from the school building. It’s my first time seeing her. Such an ephemeral-looking beauty~

“Oohh, Enjou-sama’s! I certainly do wish to greet them.”

GYAHHHH! Otousama’s words just made things even worse!

“Dad, Mum, I think Reika wants to spend the last moments of primary with her friends. Would it be okay if she went? It’s her graduation ceremony, after all.”

Oniisama!

“However...”

“I also wanna walk around the place with Shuusuke.”

Kaburagi got on board.

“What a helpless boy, you are. Very well, go have fun. My apologies, Kisshouin-sama. Masaya is quite a wilful child.”

“No, no, not at all. The rumours of Masaya-kun’s excellence have reached my ears, you know.”

After saying his goodbyes to my family, Kaburagi immediately headed off to Enjou.
I need to leave now as well!

“Well then, I shall also be heading to my friends. Kaburagi-sama, please excuse me.”

Giving a small bow, I hurried over to the ring of girls.
I'll leave the rest to you, Oniisama!

Just as I thought I had finally escaped from my parents, Serika-chan and Kikuno-chan had been lying in wait to get stories about the Kaburagi family from me. Please, just give me a break~

Since it's our precious graduation ceremony, I wanted it to end more enjoyably.
Even though the incidents lasted just a few minutes, I'm dead tired.
Or rather, if things fall into the same pattern at the middle section entrance ceremony, what am I going to do...
I hugged Oniisama's bouquet tightly.

But uraras, huhhh? I had no idea roses like that existed.
Rococo and roses. Kuh-! It's way too fitting, if I do say so myself.
Isn't this exactly a shoujo manga development? But it's a little sad that things only happen with my blood-related brother. But well, that's good in its own way too.
This is also part of the 'future blessing' curse, after all.
I'm sure once I enter middle school, a wonderful lovey dovey development will await me too.

When I got home, my excited parents pestered me about visiting the Kaburagi house, but I gave excuses and told them that Kaburagi hated women, and so going would

actually bother him.

But looking at these two, they're deeeefinitely not gunna give up, are theyyy?

Honestly, I wish they would just stop with their weird ambitions already.



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